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MEDIA REVIEW

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THE POLITICS OF  
COMMUNITY MEDIA





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## COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

WINTER 1999  
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Cover photo courtesy of Paper Tiger

As the journal of the Alliance for Community Media, Community Media Review shall support the Alliance mission by providing: a comprehensive overview of past, present and future issues critical to the Alliance and its membership; vigorous and thoughtful debate on those issues; and a venue for members and like-minded groups to present issues critical to the Alliance.



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## 'Talk Amongst Yourselves...'

Information, resources, networking and national office announcements are at your fingertips day or night. The Alliance hosts two listserves to help you:

Those interested in community media (Alliance membership not required), should send notice to subscribe to [government@aalliancecm.org](mailto:government@aalliancecm.org) then sign on to: [alliance-forum@lists.surveysay.com](mailto:alliance-forum@lists.surveysay.com)

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## The Scientific Art of Politics

by **Bunnie Riedel**

Executive Director,  
Alliance for Community Media

It'd be terrific if you could just have a great idea and instantly it would be implemented. But it takes a certain amount of negotiation and compromise to get others to "buy in" to your great idea. Sometimes getting the support of others may also require "marketing and hype." Think not? Remember the last time you tried to get your friends to the movies and how long it took to agree on which movie you would see? Did you try to persuade them by citing terrific reviews, the director's credits or the actors' capabilities? Did you do what you could to make sure that your movie was the one chosen? Were you disappointed when it wasn't? Well friend, you were lobbying.

Most of us understand how to lobby our friends for the movie of our choice, but when it comes to lobbying decision makers on issues that are important to us, we feel shy, inexperienced or out of our league. By employing the same political strategies we use in every part of our personal and professional lives, we can affect the outcome of issues in real and tangible ways.

The following tips are important to remember whether you are working on a single event (say a bill or a city council action) or a long range political strategy:

**Relationships are crucial.** Decision makers at all levels are human beings, whether they are your county council members or your federal senator. In order to get them to pay attention to your concerns, you must build a positive relationship of some sort. Relationships take time and effort. People who work or volunteer in access are uniquely situated to building positive relationships with decision makers. Like everyone, decision makers love to be on TV. Appearing on television increases their visibility and importance in the community. Getting decision makers into your centers for a television interview lets them personalize who you are and what you represent and the next time you visit their office, they will know your issue is community media. Being in the media allows you to have more frequent contact with decision makers than most

*...organizing is 95 percent "grunt work" and only five percent glamour. It is database maintenance, photo copying, envelope stuffing, bulk-rate mailing, meeting attendance, etc. that makes the difference between building a movement or just howling in the wind.*



constituents get. Have these decision makers on as often as you can. The more you interact, the better your relationship will be. Again, this takes time and effort.

**Commit to constant education.** Each of us would love to imagine that our burning issues are also the burning issues of others. That is simply not true. One of the biggest mistakes I've seen grassroots activists make is to assume that a decision maker was fully informed about their issue. Not only is that false, it is insulting. There are dozens of issues facing decision makers every day, yours is just one of them. If you can approach a decision maker with the attitude that it is your job to provide them with the information they need to do their job, you will become a valuable ally. Educating your decision makers about your issues is an ongoing, constant process and it takes commitment and patience to do it right.

**It's a marathon, not a sprint.** There are times when you will need to "sprint" because something has just happened to threaten PEG. But, by and large, it is a marathon that you are engaged in. It is all the boring miles of road that lay before you that really count, not the last 50 yards. This gets back to relationship building and the education. Anybody can sprint by themselves, but you can't do a marathon without an extensive network of support. That takes planning and dedication, it takes outreach to the community and the galvanizing of stakeholders. The political stories I hear which are most successful are those that involve plenty of groups, organizations and individuals who are given some ownership of the access center in one way or another. Creating that community ownership takes time.

For years, I have told various staff that organizing is 95 percent "grunt work" and only five percent glamour. It is database maintenance, photo copying, envelope stuffing, bulk-rate mailing, meeting attendance, etc. that makes the difference between building a movement or just howling in the wind. If you can stand the arduous miles between here and there, you will receive the reward of cheering fans at the finish line (maybe even a trophy with your name on it if you're lucky).

**Politics is an art and it is a science.**

Politics frequently demands artistic creativity in the problem solving process and sometimes it demands sizzle and pizzazz. The science of politics demands the consistent application of basic principles over a sustained period of time, the goal is to gain critical mass and when you drop pebbles long enough, an avalanche in your favor results.

Understanding that political decisions are rarely haphazard but instead are the result of somebody, somewhere, working these principles may not only give you an advantage, but may sustain you when the going gets tough. There are few political goals that cannot be achieved. The variables in politics have more to do with time, resources or issue sustainability. And even these variables can be overcome.

Knowing this can give you confidence to go after what your access center needs and wants. Just as in the example given at the start about getting your group of friends to go to the movie you've chosen. They may not pick your movie this time out, but if you will keep offering them options, keep giving them good information about your movie, they will go eventually with your choice.

Politics is no different.



# Alliance to Mark Media Democracy Week

The Alliance for Community Media has designated March 19-25, 2000, as Media Democracy Week. We hope access centers around the country will join with us and reach out to their communities through various media activities to educate and advocate on behalf of media democracy.

Following is a list of a few things you can do. Of course, you are perfectly welcome to come up with your own ideas based on your knowledge of your community and what you think will work!

- ▲ Have your city or county council or cable commission or state legislature pass a resolution proclaiming March 19-25, 2000, as Media Democracy Week and honoring your facility or PEG access.

- ▲ Circulate the Petition for Media Democracy to the following groups:

Service Clubs and Organizations, Religious Institutions, AARP, VFW, League of Women Voters, etc; Ethnic Organizations, Disabilities Rights Groups, Unions, Chambers of Commerce, Gay and Lesbian Organizations, Women's Rights Groups, Political Groups, Consumers' Groups, Business Clubs, Sororities and Fraternities, Student Groups, etc.

- ▲ Think of all those groups in your community that you currently work with and seek out those that you want to do outreach to. The petition and the brochure are great conversation starters.

- ▲ Get a press release out to the community. Do a PSA at your access center that you can send to your local broadcasters (TV and radio). Take out an ad in the local paper. Get posters put up on bus stops and buses, taxi cabs, etc.

- ▲ Interview your local officials on the topic.

- ▲ Have your cable operator

## FIND OUT MORE

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202.393.2653 fax.  
or email at  
government@alliancecm.org  
www.alliancecm.org

honor your center with a certificate or award. Honor your cable operator with a certificate or award. Congratulate the cable operator on their contribution to "media democracy."

- ▲ Offer to do "media literacy" training to local schools.

- ▲ Offer to speak to local groups—many local groups look for speakers for their meetings, let them know you are available.

- ▲ Write a letter to the editor

on media democracy.

- ▲ Get buttons, bumper stickers, etc. made and pass them out to the community.

- ▲ Hold an event to kick off Media Democracy Week. Try a rally or a bike-a-thon or a wine and cheese night.

- ▲ Have your producers include the subject of media democracy in their shows.

- ▲ Show the 10-minute *Campaign for Media Democracy* tape on your channel. (Available at cost for \$5 from the Alliance office.)

- ▲ Do person-on-the-street interviews on the subject.

Remember...this is a week for you to do what you think works in your community. And, it's a week to bring attention to all the good work you do every day.



National Alliance board member Serena Mann (University of Maryland) makes the case for media democracy with FCC Chairman William Kennard at NATOA's annual conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

## SAMPLE PROCLAMATION FOR MEDIA DEMOCRACY WEEK

**Whereas** democracy is the foundation of our society and in order for democracy to flourish, people must be able to communicate ideas, share opinions and get information;

**Whereas** a healthy, democratic society is founded on an engaged, informed and included citizenry;

**Whereas** the primary means of information delivery and exchange today is through electronic media;

**Whereas** Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) media centers provide people with access to electronic communications training, equipment, facilities and delivery systems; and encourage civic dialogue and participation; and teach electronic media literacy;

**Whereas** Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) media centers serve their communities' needs and promote media democracy for all people regardless of their life circumstances, their political or religious beliefs or their ability to pay;

**Therefore be it resolved** that the (City or County name here) proclaims March 19-25 as Media Democracy Week in honor of the work of (Your Center's name here) and its contribution to the citizens of (City or County name here). And, the (City or County name here) supports the efforts of (Your Center's name here) in its activities during this week as it seeks to educate the community on the important role of media democracy in the perpetuation of liberty and freedom.

*(This sample proclamation can be used as it is here, or you can "customize" it to fit your circumstances. For instance: Government access may wish to emphasize their role in keeping local citizens informed and engaged in council meetings/actions or local elections, etc; Education access may wish to emphasize their contribution to continuing education or media literacy training in local schools; Public access may wish to emphasize their work with local non-profits and their contribution to diverse voices and the First Amendment. Whatever you do, having official recognition for your work in the community and your contributions to media democracy will help formalize and reinforce your week's activities.)*

Community Media Review encourages letters to the editor. Letters must include the author's name and contact information. Letters may be edited for length. Address to the Alliance for Community Media, 666 11th St. NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC, 20001-4542, fax 202.393.2653, email acm@alliancecm.org



## Political Community Relies on Stories

by Rob Brading

Most of us were lucky enough, fortunate enough, to grow up hearing stories from parents, relatives and friends, having stories read to us, and learning to read stories. For many of us, stories told and retold are the strongest and warmest memories of childhood. Those stories, the stories we heard, the ones we learned to tell, the ones we tell today, helped form us as human beings and helped shape our lives.

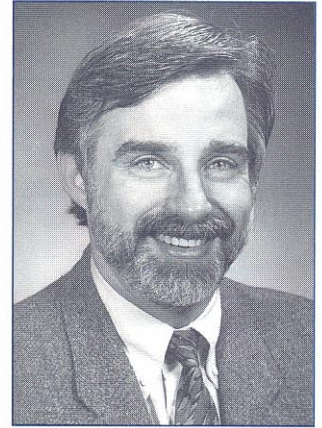
Political community relies on stories as well. Politics aren't simply about competing policy prescriptions. Politics would be less messy, a much simpler, tidier, straightforward enterprise if they were. But policy analysis, by itself, isn't enough. The stories we tell, the stories we believe, create our political and cultural beliefs, and they help us to make sense of our lives.

Healthy political community depends on people making sense of their lives and their communities. One way we do that is through stories, stories that help us to understand not just our individual places and conditions, but that interpret the character and purpose of our community.

For more than three decades, community media activists have been creating, preserving, and nurturing public electronic green space by helping people tell their stories, giving them tools which have allowed them to develop and grow as human beings and to participate in our society and culture by telling their stories about the character and purposes of their community.

It used to be that telling our stories didn't require anything more than a hefty voice and a soap box in Hyde Park or an open meadow or a meeting hall. The reach of one-to-many telecommunications technology was limited, but access to it was easy, and using it was simple. Since then, technology has made it both easier and more difficult to tell our stories. The reach of one-to-many communication is far greater, but technical demands have created a long and sometimes steep learning curve, and effective use of the technology takes time, usually a lot of it.

*If community media is going to continue to serve our communities, we must discover and fight for electronic green spaces in these new media. Our greatest challenge is to create a living green space where personal stories thrive, where technology serves, and where we can pursue personal and political development.*



New technologies don't merely change how we communicate with one another. They also change the needs of our communities. If community media is going to continue to serve our communities, we must discover and fight for electronic green spaces in these new media. Our greatest challenge is to create a living green space where personal stories thrive, where technology serves, and where we can pursue personal and political development.

We hear a lot of talk these days about the digital divide. Mostly the talk is about people who will have access to technology and those who won't and how that lack of access to technology will create a second-class citizenry. But the digital divide is about more than access to information or education on the Internet or e-commerce.

There's another divide in the making. That's the one between democracy and technology. Some folks say that the telecommunications/digital revolution will revolutionize our political system, that our citizenry will be reinvigorated because of access to the free-for-all arena of the Internet. Authors from the technically savvy, such as Harold Rheingold to the politically savvy such as President Clinton's former advisor Richard Morris, have written books and articles claiming that the Internet will bring a new, golden political age of citizen participation.

Frankly, they haven't been paying attention to either the history of telecommunications in the United States or to the recent development of the

Internet. The increasing commercialization of the Internet, the incipient efforts to control content, the full-scale arguments over who should have access via cable and telephone company wires to high-speed Internet access, and long-term strategic positioning by companies to corner as much advertising revenue as possible, all point in the same direction—commercialization with little, if any, public service or public space required. Without a different public policy mind set, how will this technology become a thriving public electronic green space when every other communications medium has become the province of commerce?

Republican (that's a small r) politics requires public spaces. Whether it's the fields where people gathered for the Lincoln-Douglas debates, New England town meetings, African American churches during the civil rights movement, or our local access channels, we require, democracy requires, places where we gather to interpret and argue about our condition, cultivate solidarity and engage one another. Our challenge is not only to maintain the status quo but also to create new ways for people to participate, to create new opportunities for involvement, and to create new public electronic green space.

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PRESENT

# 3 DAYS IN THE DESERT

TO ENVISION COMMUNITY MEDIA  
AND INFORMATION CULTURE  
IN A NETWORK SOCIETY

**JULY 9, 10 & 11, 2000**

Travel to Tucson a few days before the Alliance convention and join us for an educational and strategic thinking experiment. Using an experiential practice based upon indigenous models of social interaction, *Seven Directions* [[www.7directions-earthtime.com](http://www.7directions-earthtime.com)], we will consider the role of community-based information and media in the network society's global media culture. Participants will develop their own perspective on the role of community-based information and media in the coming years. If they choose, the writing they develop will be published on the presenting organizations' web sites.

Advisors: George Stoney [New York University], Pat Aufderheide [American University], Bob Devine [Antioch College].

Shuttle from COD Ranch to the airport and to the Alliance Conference provided.

*Three Days in the Desert* will take place at historic C.O.D. Ranch. Just off the Arizona Trail, high in the juniper and mesquite woodlands of the Coronado National Forest, and only 35 miles North of Tucson, Arizona. An ideal setting for groups seeking an out of the ordinary experience, a place to renew dreams and restore the spirit. Visit [www.codranch.com](http://www.codranch.com)

Participation will be limited to 35.

*If you would like to join us contact:*

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606-581-0033  
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*Or visit our web sites at:*

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## An Invitation to Join the

# *Alliance for Communications Democracy*

6...increasing awareness  
of Community Television  
through educational  
programs and participation  
in court cases involving  
franchise enforcement and  
constitutional questions  
about access television.

**Become an Alliance Subscriber for \$350/year** and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance activities.

- **Voting membership** open to non-profit access operations for an annual contribution of \$3,000.
- **Associate, Supporter and Subscriber memberships** available to organizations and individuals at the following levels:
  - Alliance Associate, \$2500 - copies of all briefs and reports.
  - Alliance Supporter, \$500 - copies of all reports and enclosures.
  - Alliance Subscriber, \$350 - copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to Rob Brading, Multnomah Community Television, 26000 SE Stark St., Gresham, OR 97038, telephone 503/667-7636, or email at [rbrading@mctv.org](mailto:rbrading@mctv.org)

For the past 10 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act only now beginning to manifest themselves, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications.

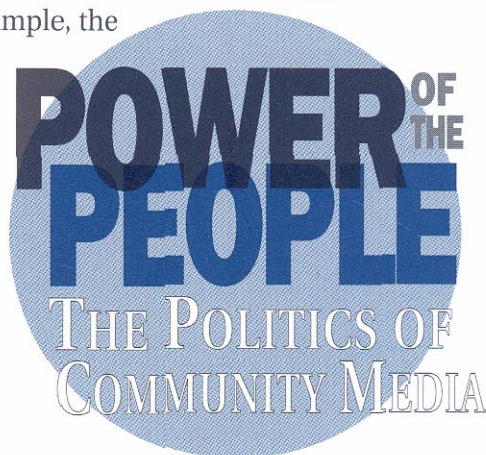
If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!



People watch local access programming and they want it funded! According to a national survey conducted for the Benton Foundation,\* greater than 70 percent of those polled are in favor of Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access and in favor of commercial TV footing the bill. Greater than 75 percent say that "broadcasters should meet public obligations in return for free access to provide digital TV on new public airwaves."

What does free speech mean in the information age with no public access to mass media? Community media can change our lives. Ordinary citizens can participate in and create communication that makes an impact on the commercial media establishment. Broadcast media have not fulfilled their promises to provide public forums as a service to the public. At election time, for example, the broadcast media auctions communication between candidates and the electorate to special interest groups.

The following stories offer media activists a sampling of strategies, long-term plans, realistic goals and quick-fix activities that promote and protect free expression and the pathway to democracy. Sacrifice, risk, change, difference, commitment, and action make up tomorrow's community media agenda. Another generation will move us out of the clichés of the past to a world where George Stoney's 'video letter' will have the sophistication hardly envisioned when the concept of community media began.



"Cultures don't often merge easily." **DIRK KONING** offers 'food for thought' to the media activist who must choose "the best transmission option to reach the right audience." **GEORGE MCCOLLOUGH** and **INJA COATES** found themselves fighting for what they thought they had already won. **TOM BISHOP** takes action as someone lurks from behind waiting to capture the valuable PEG channels and resources. **JEFFREY HANSELL**'s media activists pair their 'pirate' broadcasts against France's 'acceptable' polished TV awards. **PAUL LeVALLEY** is now an advocate of "by whatever means necessary." **RICHARD TURNER** challenges us to prepare for the way we do business for a future when the white majority turns brown. **PATRICIA MOORE** brings to life the Mayan nation amid bright flowers, brilliant textiles, enigmatic pyramid ruins and government repression. **LUCILLE HARRIGAN** enlists the help of fellow citizens in Maryland to ensure that PEG keeps pace with technology. **KAREN THORNE** bridges the gap between community television and community radio in a culture that struggles with new technologies and the affects of apartheid imbalances. **LAURIE CIRIVELLO** recounts Santa Rosa's struggles for connected communication links among those entities least likely to agree on anything. **PAUL CONGO** provides the practical wisdom for continuing the combined PEG struggle. **SUE BUSKE**, in six steps, distills over 25 years of wisdom in community media. **FRED JOHNSON** reminds us to take a critical look at our access goals and vision and to keep in mind why PEG access exists. **MICHAEL EISENMENGER**, **CAROL SPOONER**, and **JIM ELLINGER** put teeth in the paper tiger in support of community radio.

\*Survey prepared by Lake Snell Perry & Associates; published in the Benton Foundation, *The Future of Television: What's at Stake in the Debate over Digital Broadcasting*, 1999.

— Patricia Garlinghouse, Editor-in-chief

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*I* slide through the conference hallways with a sense of wonder and excitement. New people, new technology and new opportunity. The year was 1990 and our little public access center had just gone out on a limb with a 5-4 vote of the board to buy a FM radio station. I was off to the national convention of community radio folk to figure out how to make it fly. What a different world from community television. I hadn't seen so many Birkenstock sandals, shirts over shirts and ponytails since a decade earlier at an NFLCP gig. These folks were savvy community organizers who had scrapped for financial and political self-survival for years and knew the demographics of their audience like the back of their hands. The second person hired at a community radio station was a fund development director. Having worked for PBS I realized the value of these folks.

The conference sessions were similar to NFLCP at the time. What effects will the shift of technology have on us? How do we get our communities more involved? How do we keep Congress from selling us downstream? How do we keep boards from sending us upstream without a paddle? A main difference though was in programming. Community television had the simple plan to provide first-come, first-served access to television. Yikes! Community radio has seen the demise of dozens of stations over that concept of format. What musical genre, selected by whom, for what audience? People love their music and they will fight for it.

Another stop on the train toward an integrated multimedia center finds me with a group of 14-year-old hackers in 1984. They are showing me how they tied their little Apples together with friends nearby to create a network they can type messages across without paying long distance bills. I introduce them to a local reporter to share this interesting concept, and before she gets back to the newspaper, they hack the dial-in code of the paper, write her article about them and submit it for publication. Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on your "take," they spell her name wrong on the article and a desk editor catches it.

The newspaper calls the cops, descends on the boys and me, and I talk the editor into having the boys explain how they did it in return for amnesty.

There weren't civic network conferences to attend at the time and Freenets were just getting started, so we jumped on board. What a different world the early Freenet folks were, mostly pasty skinned, white young males with way too much time on their hands. Some talked of civil society, free access and the great oppressor, but many wanted fast access to games and a better pixel count to look at pictures of pasty skinned white young females. The free access part hit a cord.

Meanwhile engineers at Bell Labs were hustling to find the unified field theory of multimedia integration. Voice, video and data as one ubiquitous bit stream, metered by the second into every home, school and office—convergence in a word, convergence of technology unleashing waves of corporate buyouts, consolidations and hostile takeovers. It is still happening.

The Community Media Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan continues with a noble experiment meshing community radio,

# MACHINES ARE COLOR BLIND

## THE POLITICS OF INTEGRATING MEDIA CULTURES

by Dirk Koning

television and computing into a seamless environment to "build community through media." A single place for the public to learn about media and its creation, to have tools to create stories and information, and to have multiple options to transmit messages via voice, video and data. Or all together at once. The machinery is the easy part. We decided early on to celebrate the differences between community radio, television and computing. The mission can be the same, but the path taken to achieve the mission can be quite different. Community radio receives no subsidy, so it has to cater to an audience that really wants to listen and twice a year pick up the phone and show support with a donation. You can nibble the hand that feeds you but...

Community television can learn some lessons about audience dynamics and can certainly learn some lessons from the fund development folk of community radio. Community computing folk can learn some lessons from community television when it comes to public policy and local lobbying. We all must learn from each other.

Cultures don't often merge easily. Just look at the history of war. But community media needs to lead the way with tolerance, understanding and wide-eyed vision to best serve our communities. Our communities don't care about the differences between media; they want access to the best information through training, the most versatile equipment, and the best transmission option to reach the right audience. Our communities want context. What does this media integration mean for me and my family and friends? Why should we care about media consolidation on the international level? So what if the USA is exporting culture via media worldwide. So what if *Baywatch* is the most popular show on earth. So what if the radio and television stations are the first thing seized in a coup. So what if our kids spend more time with television than teachers. So what if they see thousands of violent scenes on media per year, yet naked breasts are banned. So what?

The words community and communication mean 'to share.' Community media is in a unique position to share knowledge and context, to share equipment and technology, and to share transmission via cable, radio, Internet, fax, phone...whatever. If all information is being converted to the simplest common denominator as 1s and 0s and moved in bit streams via fiber, coax and RF waves in the air, let's join the club. Let's be Bit Stream Activists. Let's be Pixel Dust Producers. Let's build MultiMedia Centers. Let's blend the financial independence of community radio with the open access platform of community television and mix in the technical savvy of community computing and watch the sparks fly. Let's be open to old and new media. Let's share and partner with all who support the mission. Let's make up new media and new uses for old media. Let's make sure the revolution is televised and broadcast and streamed and printed and Brailled and signed and relayed and shouted from the mountaintops with megaphones.

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# A PHILADELPHIA STORY

## WHEN SHALL DOESN'T MEAN SHALL

by George McCollough and Inja Coates

Our tale begins back in the winter months of 1997 when rumors began circulating about the cable refranchises. A small coalition of civic-minded citizens came together to ensure that public access was part of the new cable contracts. No one knew the extent of the struggles that lay hidden in that task. The naive bunch of community activists soon found themselves thick in a plot of greed, corruption, unfulfilled promises and apathy characteristic of Philadelphia politics.

Two years later, after initiation by fire, the group has developed the political savvy, community support, and the determination to see this fight through to the end. Following are some of the highlights of our education in local government and corporate politics.

**Promises, Promises.** Cable TV came late to Philadelphia. It was not until the early 1980s after bitter political infighting and huge promises that franchise agreements were awarded, and the city finally began to be wired. In an effort to ensure minority participation, the city established four franchise areas and awarded contracts to four separate companies vying for city business.

During that time, community activists pressured the city and cable companies into adopting fairly progressive public access provisions. In December of 1983, Ordinance #1963 was passed for the creation of an independent public access corporation; and provisions for one city-wide and eight neighborhood facilities, five mobile production vans, five channels for public use and funding for capital and operating costs were written into the cable contracts.

Public access advocates moved on with their lives, believing the battle had been won. Little did they realize that none of it would come to pass.

**PCAC on the Scene.** While public access appeared on the political landscape from time to time since the early 1980s, it remained a largely forgotten issue by many. Shortly after resolving the cable squabble, the city was thrown into chaos by two major events—the city's near bankruptcy and the devastating MOVE confrontation.

Not until 1997 did a sustained organizing effort to push the city into action begin. The Philadelphia Community Access Coalition (PCAC) formed with the knowledge that Comcast was out to grab channels, and it was suspected that Comcast would try to drop the public access provisions from their new contracts. Even though the city never lived up to its agreements regarding public access, at least it was on the books. Without those provisions, the promise of public access in Philadelphia would die.

A hastily called town meeting in October 1997 gathered scores of concerned citizens, media activists and old-time public access advocates. The message of the evening was clear...the citizens have been promised public access for too long, and since the general public had neither experienced public access or had long since forgotten about it, PCAC had a huge public education campaign to do.

PCAC then focused on developing a workable organizational structure and strategy including building community support through outreach, fundraising, political advocacy, and researching legal options.

**When Shall Doesn't Mean Shall.** At a budget hearing in 1998, testimony by PCAC members got the attention of Council

President John Street. About 20 PCAC members attended a meeting scheduled at his request, where he stated "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that public access is a good thing." He said he needed to do some poking around and suggested we meet again in a couple weeks to hear his report.

At PCAC's second meeting with Council President Street, it was immediately obvious the tune had changed when he marched the city's lawyers, who told us, "What we're dealing with is your garden variety budget issue." When ques-

tioned about the directives in Ordinance #1963, Street responded, "Well...sometimes shall doesn't mean shall."

In this same meeting, the city's lawyers told PCAC that no hearings would be held on the refranchises until the new council term in 2000. A week later, PCAC got a tip from inside city hall a week before public hearings for Comcast's franchise renewal in June of 1998. There was little other publicity of these hearings.

PCAC followed Comcast's hi-tech presentation with nothing but impassioned testimony and a few hand-painted signs. In the last session before summer recess, amidst labor disputes and other crises, the council took just 90 minutes to decide the fate of telecommunications for the city for the next 15 years. They also saw fit to give up one of its government channels, two educational access channels, and free (commercial) use of the unused public access channels.

Due to PCAC's vigilance, the provisions for public access were maintained from the original agreements. The city's commissioner on public property later testified that the 1983 terms were rolled forward with no thought to update them to today's standards. This small victory of sparing public access in the new contract only seemed to strengthen PCAC's resolve to see the city's system implemented.

Refranchising for Greater Media a few months later sailed through council almost as fast, but this time, PCAC had a few







allies on city council demanding answers to some questions about public access. The cable companies testified that they were ready to comply as soon as the city set up the public access corporation mandated in the ordinance. But the question remained, what is the city gaining by not setting up the corporation?

PCAC members continued to meet with allies in city hall, and in

December 1998, on

the last day of council and the

last day of Council President Street, who was stepping down to run for mayor, a resolution was passed to hold a hearing to investigate issues surrounding public access.

**Spreading the word.** Like many citizen groups, PCAC began outreach by signing up nonprofits and community based groups and started a petition drive and letter writing campaign. PCAC also worked on expanding the number of groups in the coalition. After spending months attending dozens of community meetings, we realized that we needed a more efficient way to get the issue of public access on peoples' radar screen. PCAC launched a massive (by grassroots standards) publicity campaign in spring 1999 to coincide with the local primary elections. The campaign included TV PSAs, billboards, posters and signs on public transit. Soon public access ads replaced tobacco and liquor billboards in neighborhoods throughout the city.

The campaign was designed to raise awareness about public access and encourage people to call PCAC's hotline with their show ideas. We received hundreds of responses, and were successful in getting about 70 local groups to endorse the cause.

**800 Pound Gorilla.** A council member once described the fight for public access as going up against an 800 pound gorilla. Comcast, once a small family owned company, has become that gorilla. Publicly considered a good corporate citizen, behind the scenes they are busy sweet-talking city officials.

PCAC called Bunnie Riedel, the executive director of the Alliance for Community Media, when a meeting was finally scheduled with the mayor after numerous requests. Mayor Rendell was "delayed," but the meeting progressed with two of his staffers. While agreeing that the majority of public access programming is valuable, they hinged their whole objection on the lack of content control. When asked if they believed in free speech, they essentially answered that of course they believe in free speech... they're just concerned about the lack of content control.

The Coalition left the meeting writing off the mayor, who would leave office at year's end, and began concentrating on the upcoming hearings. But more surprises were in store.

**Follow the Money.** In his final budget address in January 1999, Mayor Rendell, considered America's mayor for restoring fiscal

stability to the city, was greeted by a 50-foot banner proclaiming, "15 years is too long, Public Access NOW!"

During the budget hearings that followed, a shocking development occurred when a few council members grilled the public property commissioner about public access. Under questioning, the commissioner testified that he had dropped the public access line item from the budget and disbursed the funds as he saw fit. One outraged Councilman asked if this were some new veto power—veto by inaction. Other pieces of this unraveling mystery became clear, including some \$7.5 million designated for operating public access had gone into the city's general fund.

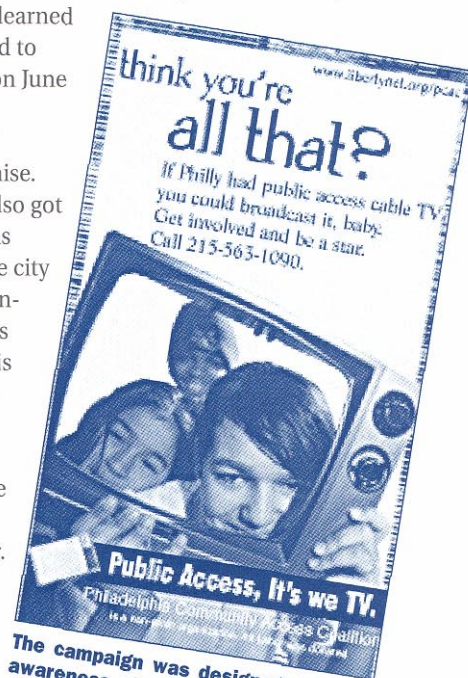
This raised such a stir that the new city council president called for a council briefing to fully explore the issues. One councilman heartily agreed, and suggested that the mayor be present to answer questions.

But somehow that fact-finding mission turned into a secret briefing by the mayor to make clear his position against public access. Around this time, Bunnie Riedel received a phone call from Comcast seeking other examples of public access programming. Comcast also called several other places and succeeded in supplying the mayor with a tape reflecting the most racy and bizarre shows ever seen on public access. While the mayor came in and made some jokes about the "dirty programs" he used to watch on New York's public access, many council members resented the heavy-handed attempt to bias their opinions. The mayor alternately claimed that no one in Philadelphia cared about public access or that most public access programming is offensive or trivial.

**A Tale of Two Hearings.** After months of negotiating, a hearing date for public access was finally scheduled for June 17. On June 10, PCAC learned that Comcast managed to squeeze in a hearing on June 16 for their recently announced buyout of Greater Media's franchise.

That week PCAC also got wind that Comcast was going to wine and dine city officials at a special luncheon at Philadelphia's Ritz Carlton Hotel. This way they could assure their acquisition of Greater Media Cable was a done deal before setting foot in council chambers a week later. PCAC and the press tried to attend the luncheon, but were escorted out.

At the hearing on June 16, the franchise transfer was challenged on several grounds. Some council members took objection with the



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fact that the press had been notified before the city. One councilman questioned Greater Media whether it was ethical to be refranchising with the city while secretly negotiating a sale of that franchise. "Does a new 15-year franchise agreement make you more valuable?" he asked. After huddling with their lawyers, no straight answer could be had.

PCAC sent a few strong representatives to make the case that Comcast failed to meet the terms of its original franchise agreement by not fulfilling its public access requirements. One local leader raised issues of technology red-lining, questioning Comcast whether Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods would ever get high speed internet hookups, even though they had the highest concentration of cable subscribers. Also testifying was DirecTV, who accused Comcast of unfair business practices by monopolizing local sports programming.

The most bizarre turn of events came when the public property committee rubber stamped the deal without any of the proper papers. One councilman felt it was improper to approve of the buy-out without ever seeing the specifics of the deal. This, however, did not stop the committee chair from adjourning the hearing, and Comcast executives left smiling. The next day, it was the community's turn to be heard.

**The Public Speaks Out.** Three nights of phone-banking turned out one of the largest crowds at council chambers in recent memory. The hearing featured religious groups, civic leaders, activists, media professionals, artists, poets, consumer groups, educators, labor leaders, local citizens, and national advocates, including Bunnie Riedel, Alliance attorney Jim Horwood, and Tony Riddle of Manhattan Neighborhood Network. Riedel brought letters of support from hundreds of access centers and supporters from across the country.

The five hour hearing began with an improv performance by young Philadelphia actors, singers and dancers who made a plea to Council to allow them to share their talents with other youth through television.

Scheduled to testify were city administration officials whom council hoped would shed some light on the 15-year old mystery. It was learned that they were ordered away from the hearing at the last minute by the mayor's office.

Comcast representatives once again testified they are prepared to comply with the provisions for public access, pointing the finger at the Rendell administration. However, upon further questioning, they admitted to supplying the mayor's office with the anti-public access materials shown to city council earlier in



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the year. The materials were requested for viewing at the hearings, but couldn't be located.

### **Preparing for Success.**

Ironically, one good thing that has come from the city's delay of public access is that now Philadelphia can benefit from the collective wisdom of existing access centers across the country, from establishing user policies to utilizing new technologies.

In developing a vision for Philadelphia's public access system, PCAC drew from many successful models, including Grand Rapids [MI], to create a system for the 21st century. This vision

was unveiled at the Philadelphia Community Media Conference, co-sponsored by PCAC and the Institute for Literature, Literacy and Culture at Temple University. The conference was inspired by the Alliance conference in Cincinnati in 1999, which PCAC members attended. PCAC's vision includes traditional public access TV along with Internet, radio, media literacy and community publishing. By integrating all forms of mass communications, PCAC hopes to empower communities by mirroring the global media corporations.

The conference was aimed at ordinary folks to provide an opportunity to learn about different forms of community media and new technology. In this way, we cultivated new and unsuspecting media activists mobilized to help win public access in Philadelphia.

The whole story of our struggle contains more plot twists than a Jane Austen novel. One council member told us early on that we cannot expect justice based on the merit of our issue. We have come to accept the wisdom of these words, however backwards that may seem. While we have grown adept at dealing with the vexation inherent in city hall, they still manage to astound us at times. PCAC continues to find creative ways to garner new support and move our agenda forward. In the coming months a new mayor will take office, and with him, new hope that this 15-year old struggle will finally be won.

As support grows in Philadelphia and events keep unfolding, keep PCAC's website bookmarked for further updates. PCAC would like to thank the Alliance for its continued support and all those who wrote letters for our hearings. Please send us any stories about the struggles for public access in your communities.

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*I*t was a day pretty much like any other day in the wonderful world of Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) access television. The sun was shining, cameras were humming, and we were all standing on a rug that we'd woven through years of hard work, a rug that reflected efforts at both the federal and local levels to insure that PEG access television and the First Amendment freedoms for which it stands survive.

On Tuesday, June 1, 1999, that rug was getting ready to be yanked right out from under us.

On that day an amendment to Ohio House Bill 283 (HB283), the state budget bill, was introduced in the State Senate Finance Committee. The amendment, sponsored by 8th District Senator Louis Blessing at the request of Cincinnati Bell, would have done away with cable franchise fees as many of us know them in the state of Ohio.

The troubling section of the amendment to HB283 read as follows: *Section 4939.03 (A) A political subdivision of the state shall not levy a tax, fee, or charge or require any non monetary compensation or free service for the right or privilege of using or occupying a public way for purposes of delivering natural gas, electric, telecommunications or cable television service.*

In Ohio, many communities link the charging of cable franchise fees to cable operators to a company's use of the public rights-of-way. Now this linkage is not a requirement under the federal telecommunications act. Under it you can charge a franchise fee simply in return for granting the franchise, but in many Ohio communities, and a number of other municipalities across the country, they are linked to use of the public rights-of-way. Those same franchise fees in turn provide the funding for many PEG access facilities across the state.

As important as how this amendment would affect PEG access TV was how the amendment was introduced. It was not in the original bill passed by the Ohio House of Representatives. It was not introduced before or during the public comment period on the bill in the Senate. Instead, it was introduced after the opportunity for public comment in the State Senate Finance Committee. If it had not been for it being caught by the Ohio Municipal League, and they in turn notifying their members, this amendment would have passed as is, with no input from the affected parties.

As it is, the Municipal League did notify their members, and one member, a city manager in the area covered by Waycross Community Media, passed the word onto Chip Bergquist, executive director at Waycross and treasurer for the the Ohio and Kentucky Chapter of the Alliance for Community Media (OK Alliance). Chip contacted me as the chair of the OK Alliance, as well as Bunnie Riedel, executive director of the Alliance.

The first thing we had to do was spread the word and gather information. We spoke with the office of the members of the Senate Finance Committee. We spoke with Senator Blessing's office to find out the reasons for the amendment. Then we called our local cable company and got a pretty ominous answer to this question, "if this bill passes as is, are you going to stop paying



## *OHIOANS MOBILIZE TO STOP STATE HOUSE BILL WHEN THE RUG IS ABOUT TO BE PULLED FROM UNDERNEATH THEM*

**by Tom Bishop**

franchise fees to our communities?" Their answer was simply that they could not comment on that at the moment. That answer spurred us to action.

We contacted our membership, made up mostly of PEG access centers across the state, and asked them to contact their cities to ask if they knew what was going on with HB283. Then, we asked our membership to contact their constituencies: the volunteers, producers, viewers and other nonprofit organizations that they work with on a daily basis. Let those folks know what was going on, and let them know what they could do about it.

We passed along the names of the members of the conference committee that would

consolidate the House and Senate versions of the bill, and let people know that they needed to contact these people, as well as their own House and Senate representatives, and let them know how they felt about the amendment and how it would affect their community.

Time was of the essence. Under the Ohio Constitution the Governor must sign the state budget bill by June 30. The conference committee did not even start to meet until the second to last week in June, and the bill was far from the only issue they would need to consider.

There was much more we did in the way of phone calls, talks with Senate aides, and working with our local governments to make them aware of the affects of this amendment, but most important were the letters and phone calls from our constituencies. An aide in one Senator's office told us that she, "was really tired of hearing about this issue." She said that they had no idea that this issue would raise such concern.

The letters and phone calls bought us a seat at the table. We were then able to arrange the following: franchise fees would be protected specifically in the bill and old contracts that tied franchise fees to the public right-of-way would be grandfathered.

This covered two of the three things we had hoped to achieve. We also sought to specifically protect the "non monetary compensation" mentioned in the bill. In PEG access television, this equals the channels, equipment, institutional networks and sometimes even studio space and employees provided by cable companies for local community television. Since the old contracts were grandfathered, it meant that the contracts could not be linked to the right-of-way in future franchises.

Our lesson—that we can't be standing on the rug. We have to keep weaving it. The new frontier for cable companies and other service providers is the state legislature where they hope to achieve what they haven't been able to in federal lobbying efforts and in local negotiations. We have to explore this frontier and keep our ear to the ground. We don't have the full-time troops in the state house that cable companies have, but we have a dedicated following that can be mobilized at need. We simply have to make sure that we know what is going on in the legislature.

**Keep weaving!**

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# THE BATTLE FOR 'FREE MEDIA' IN FRANCE

## FRANCE'S MÉDIA LIBRE TAKES TO THE STREETS, OCTOBER 1999

by Jeffrey Hansell

On October 2, 1999, the political coalition calling itself Média Libre coordinated a second nationwide protest to call attention to their demands for the creation of a non-commercial audiovisual sector, that would include some form of public access television or "open channels", as it is known in other EU countries.

Earlier in the week, Michel Fiszbin, a leader of the movement, had held a press conference on the steps of the Conseil Supérieur Audiovisuel (CSA) to announce the upcoming action. "The government said it would assign non-commercial frequencies once digital television is a reality, but that could be another 10 to 15 years, and we're just tired of waiting," he stated. It was Fiszbin who also helped create community radio stations in the 1980s using similar tactics. No surprise then, that he helped to found Média Libre, which he has dubbed "Les Sans Antennes," after that other French Revolution.

That Saturday, programs were presented by media collectives, alternative press and other non-profit groups throughout the regions, while Paris was host to a day of "pirate" (illegal) low-power TV broadcasts. These were staged by a number of the small media centers, such as Télébocal and Ondes Sans Frontières, both of whom are housed in "squats," or abandoned buildings.

The event was planned also to coincide with the "Golden 7s," a French version of the Emmy Awards,™ taking place that evening at the Grand Rex Theatre in central Paris and carried live on TF1, the leading commercial TV network in France.

That afternoon, besides the usual convoy of TV trucks that start rolling in, French riot police were dispatched to the theatre to put up dozens of barricades, re-direct traffic, and set up checkpoints in all directions.

It looked more like a military operation than a "television event." One French journalist wondered out loud why the national police were being used to guard a private ceremony.

By mid-afternoon, the adherents of Média Libre gathered across the street to begin a simultaneous counter-broadcast. At the same time, Fiszbin attempts to place an antenna on a building near the theatre to send the transmission directly into the awards show. He and a few others nearby are spotted by security guards inside the building. The police arrive, confiscate all the equipment, including the video camera of Richard Sovied, director of Télébocal—probably the most popular and successful of all the télé-pirates. Fiszbin and Sovied are handcuffed and along with five others are taken into police custody.

At the commissariat, it is discovered that two of those arrested are journalists covering the event. Sovied and Fiszbin are formally charged and given court dates. By 8:00 p.m., all are released with

equipment intact, after several complaints are made concerning the detention of the journalists from *le Parisien* and *Libération*.

With everyone back on the street, the antenna in question is placed directly on the makeshift TV truck of Ondes Sans Frontières. The broadcast continued until midnight unfettered, but still under careful watch by the police.

There are results. Several radio stations filed reports throughout the evening making mention of the concurrent counter-broadcast, while a number of newspapers carried stories about the protest. In fact, Média Libre had attracted enough attention that, for the first time, they are given a meeting with the Ministry of Culture and Communication to explain their proposal.

The following Saturday, Richard Sovied appeared on national TV, *Everybody's Talking About It*, with video footage revealing the violent manner in which he and the other members of Média Libre were arrested.

The next week, French authorities grant a three-month reauthorization for Télébocal to legally broadcast in east Paris over a television frequency that had been previously "unavailable."

On October 16, Média Libre celebrates this victory by bringing together many of the members at a special presentation of the first legal broadcast at Télébocal in several months. The soirée is devoted to a video compilation of protests and news

events covered by Télébocal that year.

In the intervening weeks, it becomes widely known that French government officials and members of the CSA are studying the "Open Channels" concept in other European countries, as part of the discussion of a new telecommunications law now taking place in the Assemblée Nationale and Senat.

At last word, Fiszbin reported that he and other members of Média Libre have spoken on the law project to the CSA and to other elected officials. The new law is due to be passed in June 2000. If the last six months are any indication, then there may be enough time for Média Libre to convince French lawmakers to democratize the legislation and create a non-commercial media space, free from government control and accessible to the public.

*Jeffrey Hansell is the new executive director of Malden Access TV, having worked and lived in Europe the previous two years, from where he filed this report. He may be reached at [jeffhansell@zdnetwork.com](mailto:jeffhansell@zdnetwork.com)*

### RELEVANT WEB-SITES

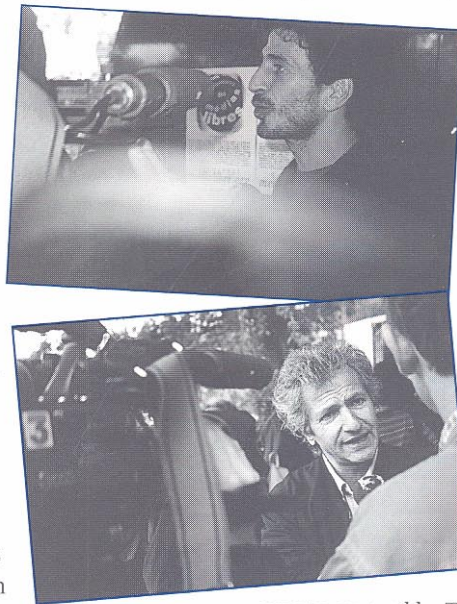
**Média Libre:** [www.medialibre.org](http://www.medialibre.org)

**Open Channels Europe:** [www.openchannel.se/euro/index.htm](http://www.openchannel.se/euro/index.htm)

**Télébocal:** [www.telebocal.com](http://www.telebocal.com)

**Le Libération:**

[www.liberation.com/quotidien/semaine/991004lunzg.html](http://www.liberation.com/quotidien/semaine/991004lunzg.html)





# THE SECRET TO OUR SUCCESS

*OR, HOW WE LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE THE FRANCHISE*

by Paul LeValley

*M*y very first official duty as executive director of Arlington Community Television back in July of 1992 was to draft a letter to the Arlington County Board of Supervisors advising them of our desperate need for new facilities and equipment. Six and a half years later we raised a glass with the board (and about 300 other guests) at the grand opening of our new multimedia production center. The story of the process of getting from there to here, while certainly not meant to be taken as a model for all access channels in all situations, may still be instructive in some of the particulars.

I'm sure that it will come as no surprise that my initial correspondence received absolutely no response. I figured one of two things might have happened. Either the letter carrier dropped it down the storm drain outside our studio or it found a home in the big file cabinet at the county office building marked "Futile and Pathetic Letters from Disgruntled Community Groups." Either way...

Clearly, simply writing letters begging for more and better space and new and improved equipment, no matter how desperately needed or well deserved, was not going to be effective in getting us to our ultimate goal. What we needed was leverage. What we had was a franchise agreement, one that was set to expire in the year 2000. It quickly became obvious to me that no real opportunity for reaching our goal would present itself until the franchise was renewed.

**We Have to Wait How Long?** The year 2000 seemed like an insufferably long time away, squeezed together, as we were in 1992, like so many sardines. How on earth would we manage until renewal? Our organization was growing despite the cramped conditions, and our equipment was beginning to fail at ever more alarming rates. Obviously, we would need to develop some interim strategies to survive over seven years.

More important, we knew we would have to use the intervening time to make



**Ready to cut the 'ribbon' are Elizabeth Campbell, founder of PBS station WETA, co-founder of ACT, and the first recipient of our Voice and Vision Award (1990), along with Chris Zimmerman [right], chair (at the time) of the Arlington County Board of Supervisors.**

certain that we were well positioned to take advantage of any and all possible opportunities during renewal. We would need allies and supporters and a strong track record of serving the community and a reputation for excellence. Suddenly seven years did not seem like such a long time. There was a lot of work to do.

The first thing we did was to take a careful inventory of our strengths and weaknesses. On the plus side, we had a very strong (though small) staff and a lot of extremely talented producers. We were well organized internally with sound and consistent policy and procedures. We resided in one of America's most educated communities, but also one that was very diverse with a large and growing population of recent immigrants. Our local government was very well managed and inclusive of the citizenry in all of its processes. Our cable company, while not openly enthusiastic about our mission, was certainly not antagonistic. Most important, we had a television channel.

But, there were negatives too. As noted above, our space was old, inadequate, and frankly, less than aesthetically pleasing (ugly). Our equipment was old, outdated, and intermittently functional. Our talented producers were starting to get restless, and who could blame them? Our videotape machines were developing a nasty reputation for eating edit masters. Our wonderful community seemed alarmingly unaware of our existence. We

had no real relationship with anyone within our open and inclusive government. Ditto as regards the cable company. Our TV channel had room for improvement.

**We Spring Into Action.**... or lurch, or crawl, or whatever verb most appropriately describes our initial, tentative steps to shore up our weaknesses. We decided the first thing that needed to be done was to somehow deal with the equipment problems. Most of the old equipment was in the U-matic or SP format. The question was, what format would we replace it with? We knew that we wanted to improve our quality as part of our

long-term strategy. At the time the best alternative in terms of format seemed to be a move to Betacam SP. The only problem, of course, was that it was about twice as expensive as SP.

In those days, we operated under a capital agreement with the cable company that stated that they were responsible for "equipment replacement." They actually held title to all of our equipment and were required to replace it with "similar" equipment as it wore out. We, however, were required to make the repairs. This, of course, created a tremendous incentive for them to argue that the equipment should be repaired, as opposed to replaced. Each year, a complicated and difficult discussion took place about what equipment would be replaced and what would replace it. We were now faced with the daunting task of convincing the cable company to replace the equipment with a much more expensive format.

I began to get very serious about developing a relationship with cable company management. Lesson: never underestimate the power of the business lunch, or the golf course for that matter. Over the course of the next two years, I took every opportunity to meet with the top local management of our cable company. I repeatedly argued that Channel 33 (us) could become a powerful marketing tool for them that would help them sell cable subscriptions (especially in recent immigrant communities) and that the channel



had the potential to be a tremendous public relations tool for them in their dealings with the community and county government. I always added that the secret to Channel 33 being a value added service for their customers was improved quality. I presented to them our plans for adding advanced workshops to our curriculum and our pledge to work closely with our producers to improve the quality of their programs. But, I never failed to make the point that our producers also needed the proper tools.

To my amazement, my arguments prevailed. They agreed to replace our old equipment with Betacam SP over the course of a four year period beginning in 1994 and ending in 1998. We held up our end of the bargain and instituted a series of advanced workshops and worked more closely with producers to help them achieve the best possible quality. The payoff was an improved relationship with the cable company, better equipment, higher quality programs, and happier producers.

At the same time we worked to improve our equipment, we also worked to raise our visibility within the community. We began to attend more community events and festivals. We arranged to tape the monthly meetings of the Committee of 100, a group of civic leaders. We taped every Civic Federation candidates' debate. We began producing a program in cooperation with the chamber of commerce. We invited local service organizations into our studio for "non-profit day" during which we would produce their public service announcements free of charge. We made certain to work the local press at every opportunity, and articles featuring producers and programs began to appear on a regular basis. We took advantage of a little noticed clause in the franchise agreement that stated that the cable company was required to help us promote Channel 33. We negotiated a deal with them for free spots on their satellite channels. Promotions for our shows began appearing on MTV, CNN, HLN, TNN, ESPN, and the Discovery Channel.

Our efforts paid off as the community slowly began to take notice. The results were more viewers for our programs, more members and producers coming in our door, and greater respect from the center of power—the Arlington County

government. I had made certain to develop a relationship with several key people within the departments most closely associated with the cable franchise, and I could see a change in attitude as our reputation improved. When franchise negotiations finally began, I received a call from the county asking me to sit at the table because, "we don't want to negotiate a franchise that ACT won't be happy with."

**Opportunity Knocks.** Sometimes, no matter how much you've planned and worked, it takes the planets to line up to make things really turn out well. In the summer of 1997 the cable company petitioned the county government for an extension to their current franchise. They claimed they wanted to begin a system wide upgrade of fiber optic cable to the neighborhood nodes, and they wanted a long-term assurance that they would continue to hold a franchise agreement with the county. As part of the cable company's petition, they agreed to a renegotiation of some of the terms of the agreement, including the provisions regarding public access.

Of course, what they really wanted was an extension so that the system would be more valuable (to a potential buyer that the cable company had on hold). They were highly motivated to make a deal. The county agreed to begin negotiations and I was asked to sit in on the planning sessions.

When I first learned that there would be an opportunity to negotiate a new deal for ACT, I sat down with a legal pad and pencil and made a wish list. I included everything from funding to space to equipment to supplemental support (utilities, infrastructure, etc.). When the re-negotiated franchise was signed a year later, everything from my original list was included.

We received a new production facility that more than doubled our space, over a million dollars worth of new equipment and furnishings, and a brand new four-camera production van (to be shared with the public schools and the government access channel). We also received a lot of nice extras like cable modems for employees, fully wired computer and phone networks, payment of all utilities, free inserts on the satellite networks, and a generous annual capital grant. And we got it all 18 months ahead of when the original franchise had been set to expire.

Like I said, sometimes the planets have to line up. Our good fortune was a direct result of the company's motivation to make a deal and their decision to use ACT as a way of greasing the negotiation. That didn't happen by accident, however. We had worked hard for several years to develop a positive relationship with them. It paid off.

It didn't hurt either that in a series of public forums regarding the franchise, we had dozens of people speaking on our behalf. Or that our supporters included Elizabeth Campbell, founder of WETA and a co-founder of ACT, and business and political leaders from all over the county. In fact, no one opposed a new and improved deal for ACT. From the start the negotiation was always about how much additional stuff we would get. Again, that didn't happen by accident. We worked hard to court the people in power. And we worked for years to improve the quality of our programs and the reputation of Channel 33 as a valuable community resource.

**The Moral of the Story.** As it turned out, we had five full years to prepare for the renegotiation of our franchise. We needed every day. Had we not done the things that we did to prepare for the time when we would sit at the table and make the case for our needs, our pleas would have fallen on deaf ears, no matter how well the planets had lined up.

My response to those who ask about the refranchising process is that it's never-ending. We're always in refranchising. We have to prove every single day that we're worthy of support. If we wait until negotiations begin, we're too late. We know the importance of our mission, but not everyone who will be deciding our fate knows. The reality is that unless educated to believe otherwise, cable companies will only see us as a drain on their bottom line, and governments will see us as nothing more than a potential headache—one that can easily be negotiated away. But if through years of hard work, we can recruit the powers that be to our side, there will be no one left to oppose us. And we will get what we want.

*Paul LeValley is executive director of Arlington Community Television, Arlington, VA, telephone 703.524.2388, or email at paul@channel33.org*



# BECOME MEDIA ACTIVE & A CHAMPION FOR DIVERSITY

## JEWELL-RYAN WHITE AWARD RECIPIENT SHARES HIS MESSAGE

*Editor's note: Richard Turner received the Jewell-Ryan Award for Cultural Diversity at the 1999 Alliance for Community Media International Conference in Cincinnati. The following is his ever timely acceptance speech.*

by Richard Turner

Aloha Kakou. Greetings Everyone. I am particularly honored to receive the Jewell-Ryan White Award for Diversity. Most of you may not be familiar with her efforts to improve this organization and improve media. Her work...Brothers and Sisters...our work...is not done. I use the words Brothers and Sisters to include you as part of my family. It is tradition in many First Nations including Hawaiian to refer to individuals who are not blood relatives as Uncle or Auntie or brothers and sisters, and so I do with you, to broaden our ability to accept one another and to ensure that all are treated like family.

The only thing more challenging than a crisis is the apparent absence of one. In the apparent absence of a crisis, my challenge to you today, is to become media active and revitalize our movement by focusing on issues of social justice, social change and empowerment through diversity.

You need not look far to find that our communities, our society, continues to strain under artificial constructs that divide us and are consistently reinforced in mainstream media. Media tends toward a homogenization of culture and therefore our beliefs. As the stakes for capturing eyeballs increases with each mega-merger, content is manipulated to obtain the greatest number of viewers or hits. Local television and cable licenses were originally built upon the principles of public interest, convenience and necessity and structured to ensure perpetuation of the First Amendment.

Now we find an environment in which the regulatory role has been relegated to ensuring competition. In today's market, competition appears to mean competing for the biggest stock buy-out. As a result, ownership and control of media by minorities has gone down in the past 10 years. And this is considered progress?

Oh yes, and how far have we progressed? Who are the hundreds, maybe more, who have died or suffered due to intolerance and bigotry in just the last couple of years, all in the ideal of perpetuating the opposite of diversity—purity. Colorado, Wyoming, Texas, Florida, New York, and the most recent, Chicago, where another isolated white male unable to cope with a changing world, who will no longer see a majority rule by 2050, seeks refuge in a church that was established for the "Survival, Expansion, and Advancement of our White Race exclusively." Don't expect this to stop. The Southern Poverty Law Center has documented over 475 organizations committed to acts of hate and bigotry.

When we look back at what has produced significant societal shifts you will observe a corollary with the advent of a new technology. That new technology provides an opportunity to dominate—to subjugate. The most sustainable technology for recording time has provided its inventors the ability to perpetu-

ate a history, a truth built upon the inventors' construct of reality. Consider the pyramids. Those in command of new technology are enabled with the capacity to perpetuate or obliterate culture.

We must revitalize our movement and include within our mission the perpetuation of all cultures. This is not an industry as we don't typically create products. We are a movement. We are about changing from one state to another. In particular we must become skilled in the practice of cultural identification. We must become identified as the source in our community for knowing how to instill culture(s) into technologies. We must move out of the stagnation of obsessive fascination with technology. It is more than just about providing access to tools.

We must become media active, not media passive. With that comes the risk of being judged as influencing content. Anyone who thinks that relying solely upon first-come first-served, one-size fits all principles is enough, is fooling themselves if you think you are not biased. You are taught to be biased from day one by your culture and reinforced by its media. That bias is instilled in the culture of your organization, in your policies and procedures. Just by the very nature of utilizing a medium that requires practiced cultural skills, such as being out in front of a camera, means we have a bias which establishes a barrier to accessibility.

You should be asking yourselves and all who are involved in access: what are the cultural practices in my access organization? Does my staff all think alike...look alike? I will know we are making progress when our listservs and workshops have more "air time" committed to inclusive practices and perpetuating diversity in addition to what is the latest digital technology.

We must go further than media literacy, we must become culturally literate. We must be able to identify, relate to, embrace and empathize with the most fragile or endangered cultures, such as our host cultures of the First Nations, what some refer to as Indian or Native.

This is an overwhelming task, but I believe access is one of the best ways to achieve this. It is overwhelming considering the domination of transnational corporations who have a vested interest in a particular and perhaps singular cultural construct. This continues to divide us. We must begin to ask people like Bill Gates how many billions of personal worth and consumed or defeated competitors will it take to prove he really is a man. I thought it was particularly fitting that at a recent Washington Metro Cable Luncheon, when John Evans presented a thank you gift to Lee Masters, president of Liberty Digital Media, for his presentation, in which he discussed the future of interactive television. The gift was a book titled *Plantation Houses of Virginia*. Are we not still on the plantation, but the size and form have changed along with the masters?

These are the questions and practices we must explore and keep the focus of our movement for social change. Pua Burgess, a community worker and leader in Hawai'i, tells this story from a scene in the Warner Brothers movie *The Assassins*, a rather bizarre movie that has us relating to the warm personal side of a



hired killer. In this scene a story is told about a little sparrow that flew south for the winter but enroute became frozen and fell to the ground in a cow pasture. A cow came along and dropped a fresh load of excrement on the frozen sparrow. The warm fresh manure defrosted the little bird and it began to sing. A cat hearing the bird sing found it and pushed it from the pile of manure, wiped it off and proceed to eat it. And the moral of this story we are told is that not everyone who craps on you is your enemy nor is everyone who digs you out of shit, your friend. Pua stops there with an important lesson in doing community work. In the movie however, they go a step further with the lesson, which is that if you are warm and comfortable, even though you are in a pile of shit, you should keep your mouth shut. This is the lesson Warner Brothers wants us to learn. I don't intend to be quiet.

I have one last story to tell and one last challenge and then I'm done. It is a personal story about my family. My mother-in-law is a full-blooded Mohawk. She was taken from her land at the age of eight and placed in a Jesuit school designed to acculturate First Nation peoples of Canada to make it possible, in their minds, for her to survive in a European-centric world. Her mouth was washed out with soap and punished any time she was caught speaking her language and practicing her culture. She graduated from that school never to return to her birth land and deprived of her birth heritage. She survived those lessons and to the extent that her children's birth certificates listed them as white.

And here is the rub. We are forced to separate ourselves in a social construct that was created to divide and conquer. You are white unless you have a drop of non-white blood. And thus the genesis of the concept of race. Race is an artificial social construct, not a genetic or biologic construct. In response to OMB Directive 15, which establishes the categories of race on the U.S. Census forms, the American Anthropological Association rejected race categories as a racist ranking system based on appearance. "Race has no scientific justification in human biology."

I challenge you to go back to your communities and begin to eliminate racist based implementations that divide us. Remove references to race in your anti-discriminatory statements. Replace it with color, with class, with economic status, and other non-racist implementations.

The story of my mother-in-law actually ends in a sad but healing and hopeful note beyond the fact that her life changed mine when I married her daughter Michele. This past June she died at the age of 79 and was buried in the Catholic tradition. At her burial, her grandson, who now lives in a Mohawk resettlement, sung a traditional Mohawk song of thanksgiving in the language of the peoples of Akwesasne. It was a healing that restored the hopes of perpetuating a culture that was stolen in her generation. I am a richer person for having that experience.

I want to thank the many people who have provided me with the insights and guidance to live a life that allows me to cross the boundaries of culture. From my Grandfather Richard B. Moore, a radical in Harlem who could be heard proclaiming in the 1960s that he is an Afro-American and that freed men name themselves, to George Stoney who has serendipitously influenced my life to use media for social change, to my contemporaries including Junior Ekau and Nalani Mattox who are community project managers at Olelo and continue to teach me how to be sensitive to the Native Hawaiian host culture. And in particular to my parents Burg and Joyce and my life partner and wife Michele. It is because of them, and many others, that would take another 10 minutes to name, that I am able to be so recognized for contributions to a process that encourages, facilitates or creates culturally diverse and/or non-mainstream community involvement in the field of community media.

Mahalo nui loa.

Contact Richard Turner at [communivision@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:communivision@hawaii.rr.com), or visit his website at <http://members.aol.com/rdturner>

## AWARDS, AWARDS, AWARDS

### Hometown Video Festival Awards

The 2000 Hometown Video Festival Awards entry brochures will be arriving in your mail box at the beginning of January. Keep your eyes open for them and make sure to enter as many categories as you can! The *Hometown Video Festival* is the oldest and largest video festival in America. Last year's awards had over 1600 entrants from the U.S. and Canada.

### Nominations Being Sought for Three National Awards

Nominations are open for the three top national awards of the Alliance for Community Media. Think of the outstanding people you know and see if they might be eligible for one of the following awards:

#### THE GEORGE STONEY AWARD

Given to an organization or individual that has made an outstanding contribution to championing the growth and experience of humanistic communication.

#### THE BUSKE LEADERSHIP AWARD

Recognizes individuals who have demonstrated commitment to the mission and goals of the Alliance for Community Media, leadership within the organization within the past three years, a high degree of involvement in the organization nationally, regionally and at the chapter level and continuing service to the Alliance.

#### THE JEWELL RYAN-WHITE AWARD FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Given annually to those persons who show an outstanding contribution to a process which encourages, facilitates or creates culturally diverse and/or non-mainstream involvement in the field of community media.

For nominating forms or further information, contact the national office. Deadline for nominations is February 15, 2000.



# MAYANS FIGHT FOR FREE EXPRESSION

## 'MAYA PERSPECTIVES' OPENS A TWO-WAY WINDOW TO THE WORLD

by Patricia Moore

Guatemala is a country of contrast and contradictions. Situated in the middle of the American continent, its inhabitants live in a multiethnic, pluricultural and multilingual nation noted for its towering volcanoes, brilliant textiles, enigmatic ruins and a living Mayan culture. Contemporary Maya people still practice their time-honored traditions of planting and harvesting corn by hand, spinning cotton, weaving, and faithfully burning incense on days marked by the Mayan calendar.

Government repression in Guatemala reached its peak in the 1980s. It was the most unrelenting, yet the least acknowledged in the Western Hemisphere. The massacres that eliminated entire Mayan rural communities belong to the same reality as the persecution in Guatemala of the urban political opposition, trade union leaders, priests and catechists. No one could have imagined the full horror and magnitude of what actually happened. Although many are aware that Guatemala's armed confrontation caused death and destruction, the gravity of the abuses suffered repeatedly by its people has yet to become part of the national consciousness.

### Milestones:

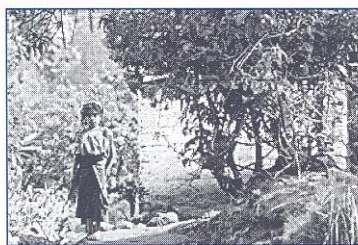
▲ In October of 1996 *Maya Perspectives* began airing over public access television in Austin, Texas.

▲ In 1997 with the help of Guatemalan organizations in the United States, the *Maya Perspectives* series began to air over public access stations in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Chicago and New York.

▲ By February of 1998, *Maya Perspectives* began airing over local cable television stations in Guatemala.

▲ In late February of 1998, members of Mayan and non-governmental organizations were invited by Patricia Moore to participate in an open discussion on the possibility of creating the first public access television/radio/internet station and multimedia training center in Guatemala. A national coordinator for the project was appointed to assist Moore in the distribution of the video series to local cable television stations.

▲ On December 29, 1998, at the second anniversary of the signing of the peace accords, President Alvaro Arzu of the Republic of Guatemala asked for pardon from the Guatemalan people on behalf of the state for the massacres and torture carried out by the military and security forces during the internal armed conflict. This gesture of reconciliation opened the doors of communication for the Mayan people, granting them the political space needed to develop their



Photographs by  
Patricia Moore

own voice through new media and global communications.

▲ In June of 1999, Moore and members of the Workers Union of Quetzaltenango established a video distribution center in Guatemala at "Casa del Pueblo" for Mayan organizations and communities that had no access to television programming.

▲ During February of 1999, an advisory council of Mayan and non-governmental grassroots organizations was formed to explore ways of working with international educational institutions, public access television stations, and foundations to create a public access television/radio/internet station for the Mayan people and establish a multimedia vocational training center in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

▲ In June of 1999, Moore and members of the Guatemalan advisory council meet with grantors who expressed an interest to fund and help further develop the project.

▲ In November of 1999, a small hotel in the city of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala was leased by the Guatemalan advisory council and Patricia Moore in anticipation of funding



for the project.

▲ Currently, Patricia Moore is working with Houston MediaSource and the Austin Independent School District Communication Academy to further develop the public access station and multimedia training center. The public access center will offer training in television production, digital editing, multimedia and web authoring. In addition, an Internet TV station will be developed.

Patricia Moore is the creator of the *Maya Perspectives* public access television



series that airs over local public access stations in the United States and in Guatemala. For the past 10 years, she has worked as a photojournalist and videographer specializing in human rights

issues. The *Maya Perspectives* video series was created by Moore to build awareness of the Mayan people and their culture.

Moore first visited Guatemala in 1993 as a documentary photographer, invited by a human rights delegation organized by the Dominican Sisters of Houston, Texas. The war in Guatemala left behind a profound impact on her desire to learn more about the Mayan people. Ms. Moore has received outstanding producer and outstanding achievement awards in cultural arts and documentary programming. In addition, *Maya Perspectives* programs on the Guatemala's holocaust have played to well attended theaters in San Antonio during the Cinefestival and the Other American Film Festival. The programs filmed by Moore featured testimonies of war survivors and the exhumation of clandestine mass graves.

*Patricia Moore is a photojournalist and videographer from Austin, Texas, telephone 512.448.9126, email [mayan@eden.com](mailto:mayan@eden.com), or [www.eden.com/~mayan/perspectives.html](http://www.eden.com/~mayan/perspectives.html)*

## MARYLAND CITIZEN TASK FORCE PROTECTS PEG

by Lucille Harrigan

Video on demand, video streaming, high speed data transmission and two-way communication are already available or on their way to many cable television viewers. Montgomery County, Maryland wants to make sure that its PEG channels are a part of this communications revolution.

The county council has appointed a working group to make recommendations about the future structure, functions and funding of their PEG channels in light of technological change. The group includes citizen activists with a variety of professional backgrounds, television and print journalists, and representatives of the cable company and the PEG channels. The citizen group has a budget for consultants and is provided with staff support.

With a February 2000 deadline for its final report, the group has tasked itself with some heavy-duty cable viewing to assess the current quality and content of programming on 11 of the 13 County PEG channels that are in use. (Two are used by the University of Maryland, one by the community college, two by the public schools, and one by county government. Municipalities are allocated three channels. In addition to one traditional "free speech" channel, an independent access corporation also runs a public affairs channel that features a daily news broadcast.)

The group has invited experts, including those from franchisee Cable TV Montgomery, for discussions about the promise of new technology, particularly the implications of the cable system upgrade provided by a recently-renewed franchise. Viewing the PEG channels as one avenue to bridge the growing technology gap, the working group members will be looking for ways to ensure the PEG channels are not left behind. The group will also be inviting representatives of NATOA and the Alliance for Community Media to brief them on how other communities are using new technology.

Charged with assessing community wishes and needs, the group intends to analyze previous surveys of citizens and volunteer cable producers and will conduct some surveys of its own. The group will especially target the community of citizens involved in public affairs who are a likely audience for PEG program offerings.

Though relatively well-funded (\$3 million annually from franchise fees), the Montgomery County PEG channels are plagued with the problems of PEG channels everywhere: How to provide a full schedule of quality locally-produced programming that serves the needs of a community of growing diversity. As a suburb of the District of Columbia, Montgomery County is a sophisticated media market and viewers have high expectations for program quality and content. Socio-economic factors provide the basis for a fairly high level of community participation.

*...Montgomery County PEG channels are plagued with the problems of PEG channels everywhere: How to provide a full schedule of quality locally-produced programming that serves the needs of a community of growing diversity.*

*Working Group Chair Lucille Harrigan, a member of the CMR Board, invites PEG operators to share their technology success stories with Montgomery County. She can be reached c/o the Montgomery County Council, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850, or at [lharrigan@erols.com](mailto:lharrigan@erols.com).*



The transformation of South Africa's broadcasting and telecommunications sector is happening at a time when national communications policies have only just begun to deal with technological innovations which have made it possible for the creation of a new accessible, low cost, participatory medium of communication. Poised at the brink of the 21st century, South Africa has the potential to develop policies that leapfrog "top down" models of mass communication and make way for a new "bottom up" approach.

For those working in community media, the establishment of community based initiatives is seen as a crucial component of an overall strategy to redress apartheid imbalances and to empower communities to take control of the democratic process of transforming their living conditions. Community media is intended to give real meaning to the constitutional right to "freedom of expression" by placing the means with which to communicate into marginalised communities. This is premised on the belief that being able to exercise the right to communicate is basic to creating a strong civil society, a genuine participatory democracy, and sustainable development. Thus, from the outset, community media inherited a clear political mandate and has been located squarely within the reconstruction and development of South African society.

Within the process of convergence between computers, telecommunications and broadcasting, telecentres, often based in multi-purpose community development centres, are viewed as ideal building blocks for the roll out of community media. Here, access to audio visual media would be offered alongside community radio and computers in a multimedia context—challenging the traditional definition of "universal access" to information and communications technology through the inclusion of multimedia access. Riding on the back of the country's national information infrastructure—the place where information, communication and development meet, community media is positioning itself to play a vital role in the production of local content "by the people and for the people" in a truly diverse mediascape.

# SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

## MAKING WAY FOR A NEW 'BOTTOM UP' APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION

by Karen Thorne

The realities of the shift from resistance to governance has been highlighted by simmering tensions over the government's macro economic policy. Critics have accused the government of abandoning the poor to appease the forces of global capital, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. These tensions are similar to those within the broadcasting sector, that is, to support the existing broadcasting industry to become an international competitor or to commit funding to enable the development of community-based broadcasting initiatives.

All indications are that the government will attempt to do both, as born out by the proliferation of support mechanisms that have been established to channel funding and support to community and independent media.

The government has proved their commitment to the provision of universal service to telephony and even information technology through the establishment of the Universal Service Agency (USA) and Fund that was formed with the purpose of ensuring the roll out of basic services to all South Africans.

Government broadcasting policy points to the "necessity for a national strategy for the roll out of the community [radio] sector" and further commits government to "act as a catalyst and at least inject some modest capital by way of an independently administered community development trust to assist particularly the underserved, needy communities."

In the space of a few years, 85 community radio licences have been issued. The universal service obligations set by the Telecommunications Act of 1996 have already been exceeded by all operators. Numerous telecentres have been established, often in the context of multi-purpose community development centres, in marginalised communities countrywide. Community radio stations have

begun to explore the potential of information networking for the purpose of programme sharing. In some cases, access to radio is offered alongside the internet in a multimedia environment.

There is no doubt that huge successes have been achieved in the creation of an enabling policy and regulatory environ-

ment for community radio, but it is not yet clear whether or not this support will extend to community audio visual media. Broadcast policy requires the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to "investigate the viability and impact of community television."

The question is whether or not the government will allow for the establishment of community television as an independent, parallel broadcasting tier, operating on its own frequency or expect it to throw in its lot through "public access time slots" with existing broadcasters. This will place the controls of community television in the hands of an already dominant, inaccessible, and bureaucratic public broadcaster or profit-driven private broadcasters.

A great deal of goodwill exists in the newly licensed community radio stations, but they lack the necessary resources to make a significant change in society. Community broadcasters are committed to promoting local interests of a development nature and would like to forge ties with non-governmental and community-based organisations and develop mutually beneficial partnerships, but have, to a large extent, developed independently from the sector they seek to serve.

The government and community media stakeholders have failed to create clear, practical linkages between community media, governance, development, educational institutions, and other social actors. Little effort has been made to ensure the free flow of information between all role players in order to harmonise objectives, save resources, prevent duplication and fill the gaps.

Community-based radio, audio visual and information initiatives are developing independently from one another in a way that ignores the realities of convergence and leads to a waste of resources, encour-

See SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUGGLE – page 28



# LEARNING LESSONS

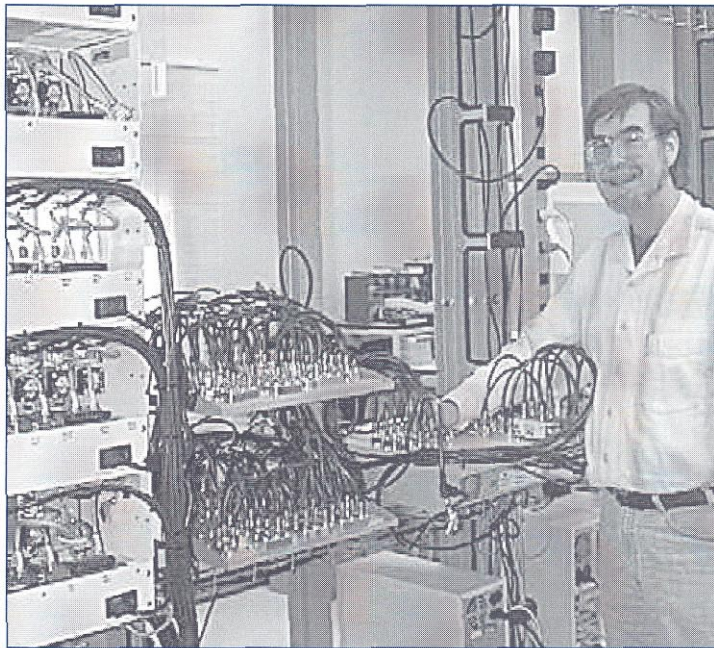
## BUILDING TECHNOLOGY FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

by Laurie Cirivello

Firm in the belief that access is not about TV, it's about communication, numerous newer franchise agreements include provisions for high-speed community networks. Usually referred to as I-Nets (or institutional networks), these fiber, coax or hybrid systems can lay the groundwork for efficient and cost effective voice, data and video transmission for the public sector. But unlike the fast track, venture capital funded telecom firms that are developing private sector networks, community projects require a different approach. Our experiences may provide ideas, alerts, or even just food for thought to other communities traveling this road.

**Time and Politics.** Many well-negotiated franchise agreements can take nearly three years to complete. Add to that the time it takes for a required cable rebuild and before you realize it, elections have changed the make up of our boards and councils; political priorities have changed as pendulums have swung and technology has continued its rapid advance.

In our scenario, well-intentioned institutional representatives welcomed a seat at the table. They fought hard, early on, for their institution to have a generous share of the fixed resources. The schools for instance sent business office representatives who saw the I-Net as infrastructure that could save money. For this I-Net, 25 hard-wired connection points on the network had to be divided up between four institutions. These locations had to be determined early on so that installation of the fiber happened during the cable system rebuild. The final configuration included 12 school district connections, eight for city government, three for the library and two for the college. Since each of these connections represents capacity, the actual costs of operating the network were to be divided accordingly. These school administrators stayed with the process, but district leadership had changed. When the time came to approve the operating contract (and therefore the payments), the school board's priorities had shifted. Connectivity (albeit slow) had become cheaper and more available. This board was immersed in curriculum and it was the business office who had been at the table



**Jim Regan, Staff Engineer at The Community Media Center of Santa Rosa at the I-Net hub located at the Media Center.**

representing the district. Needless to say, the business office could not answer the hard questions about specific curricular applications and the debate devolved into "back to basics" education versus the frills of technology in a year where budgets were being slashed. Time had passed and the I-Net was now being presented as a solution to a problem that was no longer a priority and the wrong people were at the table to sell final approval. The school board declined participation in the I-Net at this time, leaving a gaping hole in the financial set-up of the consortium. This brings me to lesson two.

**It's What It Can Do That Matters.** As the entity chosen

to operate the network, we constantly stressed capacity. "We'll build a highway and you (the institutions) will be able to drive wherever you would like to go. And you'll get there very, very fast." And the more we educated ourselves about fiber optics, the more we spoke in the language of networks. But to the average administrator, librarian or city employee, technology infrastructure is not particularly exciting and in itself stirs very little emotion. They needed to know that there was someplace they

wanted and needed to drive to. Otherwise this roadway was a very hard sell. The folks holding the purse strings are rarely engineers. For every exciting engineering discovery or decision there needed to be an explanation based on application. And the applications folks needed to be included in the conversation.

Business is part of the community, too. One of the best advocacy groups for initiation and completion of our I-Net has been the business community. While private companies will not have direct access to the network for e-commerce or other business practices, many do recognize the importance of a wired community for overall economic development

and quality of life. Many of our business leaders have been our network's most ardent supporters. Having a technology literate workforce, the promise of a "smart community," the personal convenience of electronic access to our local government services and community learning environments are all believed to be related to economic vitality in the 21st century. A public sector I-Net promotes and nurtures those expectations. The busi-

*...to the average administrator, librarian or city employee, technology infrastructure is not particularly exciting and in itself stirs very little emotion. They needed to know that there was someplace they wanted and needed to drive to. Otherwise this roadway was a very hard sell.*



# THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY CHANNELS

by Paul Congo

As we go about the mission of helping or building our communities through media, inevitably we find ourselves in political opposition to those who perceive things in very different terms than we do. Even the notion of community means very different things, depending on who you are; hence, the Alliance's emphasis on celebrating diversity.

It seems that underneath it all, most everyone believes that what they are doing, who they are doing it for, and how they do it are for the general good. Although there certainly exist sociopaths and demagogues, most people are motivated by a sincere desire to do a good job and leave the world a better place than they found it.

But we find ourselves in a society that has greater needs and expectations than it has resources to meet those purposes. Not only that, but one legacy of free market capitalism is the belief in competition as a good thing. From that point of view, other's difficulties are often seen as our personal successes—especially when those others may share the resources we feel we need to survive and succeed.

The division of community access media into Public, Educational and Governmental areas seems to me to be a particularly sad manifestation of society's tendency to compartmentalize and fragment reality. The splitting up of P, E and G has led in so many cases to unnecessary competition for resources and a loss of focus in serving the true needs of community expression. Waxing nostalgic about the "early days" before PEG was defined by acts of Congress is an obvious exercise in futility. But there is something positive to be said about a period in which community channels were simply that—channels run by and for the community at large, not to serve whatever noble but relatively narrow interests.

It is wonderful that we have public servants accomplishing all the things that PEG now does: gavel-to-gavel coverage of official meetings; educators delivering distance learning to parents and home-bound students; champions of the First Amendment testing our tolerance and waking us up to unsung issues. Too often, however, we find ourselves in competition for annual allocations or at franchise renewals ready to poke at our counterparts in PEG—speaking against entrenched governmental voices, bloated educational bureaucracies or eccentric and unneeded egotism on public access. How much more effective we could all be if instead of P, E and G we simply had community channels designed to serve everyone.

Congratulations to those communities that have structured their cable revenues to support unified PEG agencies instead of separate and always unequal P, E and G. As a movement, we would be well served to consider a trend that characterizes commercial development today—that of creating strategic mergers. Our merger and dissolution of separate P, E and G territories could bring a brave new world of internal and external support for all our work, a more holistic view of our mission to the communities we serve, and an end to wasteful and counterproductive competition and rancor with our sister media agencies.

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ness community sees government actually taking on a leadership role in attracting much needed communications infrastructure. I suggest that before getting too caught up in the non-commercial versus commercial debate, take a moment to view the community as a whole and how private and public sectors can support each other. Involve your business community. In some cases—especially in those more geographically removed from major telecom hubs—public sector projects can actually spur private sector growth and provide powerful fuel for local economic development.

## **As Technology Changes and Grows, Access Centers Are More Relevant Than Ever!**

Today, 0s and 1s are moving up and down our I-Net. The engineering for our network is exciting and innovative and capacity is immense. But the I-net is only working to half as many nodes, and we're at least six months behind schedule. We're also making it work on half the budget and other access services have been reigned in to pay for it. And the worst thing? Half the hard fought for resources—12 hard-wired nodes to school sites—lay dormant for now. So why, despite the delays, the missteps, and the changing political climate are we still sold on the idea of a public sector I-Net operated by an access center? Because what we have been best at for all these years—facilitating collaboration, providing non discriminatory access, teaching people how to use technology to make things better—is exactly what is needed to make an I-Net work. Access centers are perfectly positioned to manage and distribute public sector technology resources. We are, by our very design, independent, nondiscriminatory and operating in the public trust. We can provide an excellent neutral ground, that can allow public institutions to explore collaborations in technology while minimizing turf wars.

My final suggestion? Like in traditional access, we can learn much from each other. Find and work with other communities struggling to build functional I-Nets. We all need models, sample contracts, engineering suggestions, shared maintenance opportunities and more. Listserv anyone?

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# BASIC PRINCIPLES

## MAINTAINING THE FOUNDATION OF PEG ACCESS IN A CHANGING WORLD

by Sue Buske

*A*s a new millennium dawns, it is appropriate to explore ways to help assure that the basic principles upon which PEG access was founded are maintained. At the same time it is essential for PEG access advocates to recognize and use new media tools and new technologies, just as we must recognize and address changes in the communities served by our media access centers. If the public's right to access the electronic media is to be maintained and hopefully expanded, access staff, board members, elected officials, access producers, and community media activists must conduct the "business" of PEG access in a way that reflects both the basic principles upon which public access was created and the changes in technology and in our communities.

**1. Build Partnerships—Collaborate.** It is absolutely essential to the future of PEG access that access organizations become smart about the importance of partnering and collaborating with the local government, schools, community organizations, local business, and the local cable service provider(s). These partnerships help assure that the community media center becomes an institution within the area. They are also necessary to assure that the funding necessary to deliver vital community media services will continue to be available on a long-term basis.

**2. Remember that Access is about More than Making a TV Show.** PEG access is about media literacy and free speech. Its about localism and "globalism." It is about providing a voice to those who rarely, if ever, are heard. It is about ensuring a diversity of viewpoints and ideas. It is about helping people figure out how to "sift" through the din and media overload that they have to deal with on a daily basis. It is about having one or more outlets for distribution of the electronic message, the media tools and skills to prepare the message, help (if needed or wanted) in preparing the message, and a place to go that has people who support each other and recognize the importance of every person's right to speak and be heard.

**3. Embrace New Media Tools (but don't forget the Basic Principles).** It seems that hardly a week goes by before we hear about another access television center that changes its name to "community media center" to reflect a new and expanded mission. The term "community media access center" is far more reflective of the type of media services that are needed in most communities. Such change is good—it reflects a recognition that technological changes are happening all around us on a daily basis. It is such a name change that draws attention to the fact that community media access centers recognize the need to embrace the new tools and make them available to citizens and community groups, based upon the same principles that have guided the development of access television for nearly 30 years.

**4. Get Smart Politically.** The future of PEG access depends upon the ability of access leadership in every community to realize and act in a manner that recognizes that PEG access/community media exists in a political world. Access needs the support of elected officials and city staff as well as the community. Building support for PEG access is a political process and it must

*...If the public's right to access the electronic media is to be maintained and hopefully expanded, access staff, board members, elected officials, access producers, and community media activists must conduct the "business" of PEG access in a way that reflects both the basic principles upon which public access was created and the changes in technology and in our communities.*

be approached as such. Unfortunately, PEG access is often marginalized by those who don't understand it; those who want the needed access resources to be allocated for other purposes; those who are threatened by the concept of the public actually having the opportunity to speak; or those who fear that they will somehow lose some level of control if PEG access exists or is successful. Community media leaders must be politically smarter than they have ever been in the past.

**5. View the Franchise Renewal Process as an Opportunity—Not as a Threat.** Over the past several years some leaders within the PEG access field have viewed the cable franchise renewal process as a threat to the future of PEG access. In fact, franchise renewal is an opportunity for community media leaders, local government agencies, civic and community groups, and local businesses to move from the old cable TV world to a community media world. It is a chance to undertake a community communication planning process. Such a process, if approached in a collaborative and proactive fashion, can and has lead to remarkably positive outcomes for communities and the media access centers that provide services to them. All of us should recognize and celebrate the fact that many communities who have had no or anemic PEG access in their communities prior to the franchise renewal process are seeing well-funded community media access organizations and good production facilities starting up or evolving as a result of the cable franchise renewal process.

**6. Access Centers Need to Become Community Institutions.** In order to be taken seriously, PEG access needs to become considered a community institution, like a library or a school. Access is not some local "special interest" group that vies for funding with all the other special interests groups. A community media access center is an institution that provides services to all in the community who need noncommercial media assistance. The degree to which the media access center can provide those services is directly related to the level of funding and resources available. The level of funding and resources is often directly reflective of the ability of PEG access leaders to develop collaborations, embrace new media tools, be politically smart, effectively serve and organize the community, and view franchise renewal as a opportunity—not as a threat.

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# COMMUNITY *Lite*

## A FEW THOUGHTS ON SURVIVING, WHILE FAILING MISERABLY

by Fred Johnson

*I* write while images of global insurrection in Seattle circulate from the World Trade Organization's recent meetings there. In thinking about community access media's future, those images of Seattle's streets have me looking sideways at the space we often compare ourselves to, streets and public parks, and the street fairs, neighborhood festivals and city-wide celebrations that constitute their programming. These cultural forms of the street, like cable access, emerged from the groundswell of social unrest, political protest and activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They coalesced out of civil rights demonstrations and street protests, labor union strikes and pickets, outdoor rock concerts and other counter culture events [often in support of social struggle], street riots, inner city uprisings and anti-war marches. Now, over 25 years on, these urban expressions of discontent have been captured by forces very different from the oppositional movements that originally spawned them. The contrast with the activities in Seattle could not be more stark.

The surging energy that brought people to gather in the streets, to articulate and celebrate the need for social change has over the years been shaped by government and corporate support, and management, to create symbols of the status quo. The oppositional and vital community elements of these gatherings have given way to greater crowds and more commercial entertainment aesthetics that work transparently to prevent even the slightest expression of discontent with, or opposition to, the status quo. They have become superficial celebrations of an urban unity and community cohesion that mask and displace, not to clarify, the underlying differences and conflicts that divide our cities. The kind of symbolic "community" these managed celebrations put forth is a romantic one, loaded with nostalgia for a time that probably never existed—simulations of community that act as icons and containers of our longing for consensus and har-

mony among people with common interests and mutual understanding. You would have to look long and hard in US history to find such a time or place. Our political culture and cities have always been, and, hopefully, will always be, the site of very real conflicting interests and agendas working out creative ways to occupy the same time and place.

Many argue the ultimate expression of this mainstream reshaping and capture of the 1960s and 1970s oppositional movement's rampant use of the streets and public spaces are the now permanent urban commercial spectacles that occupy our rehabilitated industrial spaces.

Places such as New York's South Street Seaport, Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco,

Seattle's Public Market, San Antonio's Riverwalk, or Baltimore's Harbor Place. I am sure we all could add a few names to the list, and they would all be places of ephemeral pleasure and glitter watched over by sophisticated video surveillance and contained in a spectacular architecture designed to control and channel us to consumption. Sounds like television does it not? Send in the clowns and annoying mimes and the picture will be complete.

I have no doubt that many of us would be absolutely ecstatic if we could create a version of community access television that could be considered as successful a cultural form as New York's South Street Seaport or the Public Market in Seattle. So, given that we fancy our centers and channels as a kind of new urban and public space [space for communication and representation rather than demonstrations and festivals], it is wise to pause on the edge of this new millenium and ask, is this our future? Are we poised to become media versions of the tame festivity and containing, rehabilitated public spaces that started off in past decades as a whirl of oppositional spectacle and social change? Urban geographer David Harvey writes that, "Imaging a city through the organization of spectacular urban spaces

became a means to attract capital and people (of the right sort) in a period (since 1973) of intensified inter-urban competition and urban entrepreneurialism." As globalization continues to accelerate into the next century, it is a surety that community access television will come under increasing pressure to play a similar role.

Of course these kinds of changes do not happen over night. In an era where power and information are inextricably joined, domination, exploitation and tyranny are accomplished through the complex manipulation of symbols. Power seldom makes itself visi-

*Are we poised to become media versions of the tame festivity and containing, rehabilitated public spaces that started off in past decades as a whirl of oppositional spectacle and social change?*

ble and on display in the open, like a monarch marching and pushing his subjects into the shadows at the edges of power's brilliant glow. As Nan Ellin writes in *Architecture of Fear*, "Now, it is power itself which seeks invisibility and the objects of power—those on whom it operates—are made the most visible."

We won't wake up some day to find community access taken over suddenly or captured. What is plausible though, is to be captured by our own contradictions, by the manipulation of our ideological justifications for and of community, through management theory and organizational theory, and things like computerized workforce management and architecture.\* The seeds of a tame, "community lite" media may lie within the terms of our own success and current practice. For example, consider our use of theories of "community development" as a means to ground access in the real needs of our local communities, and thus use media to make direct connections between people undertaking their own development. Certainly an admirable goal and I could easily mention a number of instances where the notion of "community development" has spawned wonderful access projects. But I wonder how many of us



calling for it know that theories of "community development" are part of a larger political conversation going on nationally and internationally? Or that "community development" is being flogged by some of the most reactionary parties in that discussion as a part of a redefinition of modern democratic politics, the idea of individual liberty, the separation of Church and State, the development of civil society?

The 1990s have been called the time of the "re-generation": revitalization, rehabilitation, restructuring, rebuilding, recycling. The unspoken "re" is reaction. It should not surprise us then that communitarian theories of community and politics, like all politics, have their progressive and reactionary elements. Nor should it be surprising that, in an emerging network society of increasing corporate control and "information" as commodity, the ideology of community and communitarianism have become complex, highly contested ideological spaces that should only be entered with great caution.

One of the most dangerous and reactionary fashions is the tendency among activists and politicians from the right and the left to naively, or disingenuously, suggest we should be solving our economic and cultural problems exclusively at the community level; the place most disempowered through globalization. Calls to return decision making power and budgetary responsibility to the "community" by the Right while they privatize telecommunications and deregulate local banking and power utilities is the height of cynicism. Participating in the discussions of media, community and communitarianism requires special care. We must be very clear what community we are talking about. Is it a progressive community that understands that conflict, asymmetrical power relations and difference are the crucial elements of a democracy and almost by definition preclude the creation of communities of consensus and ideological comfort? Or are we talking about spaces of retreat, psychological comfort and containment, neutralized little media Disneylands and theme parks full of festive harmony and mainstream values?

After all the whole notion of community is fraught with a kind of ideological peril. Where do you draw the boundaries? Who is not in your community? Narrowly defined theories of "community development" can and have been used to maintain oppressive traditions, language, reli-

gion and social structures; and a simplistic definition of the communities we inhabit right now, and our role in them, would do just that.

"Community development" means many things to many people. When community media advocates suggest strategies of community development, are we saying essentially that at a time when the media and telecommunications industry are going through the most pervasive restructuring of this century, when the structures of the media system that will dominate for the next 25 years are being created, when there is more at stake and up for grabs culturally and economically than ever before in telecommunications, when the cities and regions we live in are being remapped and re-territorialized to become metropolitan regions we barely have language to describe, that at this time, the community access movement is considering defining itself as an adjunct of the caring professions? I hope not, because that sounds just slightly like 'community lite,' a longing for the illusion of common interests, comfortable consensus, a duck for cover and survival.

This is a time when we must decide if we are going to primarily be audio visual support for social services and heritage groups, or are we going to move to the center of community life and become institutions that play a central role in creating a robust public media culture in our communities and the world? Are we going to explore every available role, as facilitators of discourse, as content and program producers, as transformative media educators, as radical technologists, as sources of penetrating media criticism, as creators of

strategic partnerships and catalysts for community change? Can we play a role in creating what radical democrat Chantel Mouffe describes as a "vibrant clash of political positions and an open conflict of interests" within a "political framework that can accommodate difference and antagonism"? Further are we going to think locally and act globally in order to play a role in challenging the privatization of our global media? Contradictory as it may seem, global alliances are about the only way to maintain local control and autonomy at a time when the dynamic of the network society is 'hollowing out' the guts of civic life. It is time we began to facilitate some of our own speech regarding creating national and international media networks that are socially controlled. It is time to take up the challenge of moving beyond access to 'their media' and to the ownership of our own. "If we don't do it who will?"

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\* Examples of this "disciplinary" power, or "micro physics of power," can be seen in community media in the form of government-managed "public" programming operations; self-perpetuating boards of directors that do not allow election of some of their members from the public; and an expanding repertoire of soft-control management techniques. Like "Team Work" arrangements that leave the hierarchical organizational structures of authority intact and lurking within a faux democratic workplace that exposes employees to conveniently shifting job descriptions and constant micro-management.

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# RADIO RESISTANCE

## WILL FREE SPEECH BROADCASTING BECOME LEGAL?

by Michael Eisenmenger

Radio was around even earlier than television, but without the intense scrutiny and regulation. Radio is less expensive, more user friendly, and certainly more available. Why then, all the controversy? Some of the better known discussions involve Pacifica and its offshoots, community cable radio and microradio.

About 431 pirate stations have been targeted and shut down by the FCC since August 1997. The crackdown resulted in fines, property seizures and court procedures in which the FCC asks judges to keep the stations off the air. On March 24, 1999, four hours after the Secretary General of NATO issued the order to attack Yugoslavia, Radio B92's transmissions were banned and essential transmission equipment confiscated by the Serbian government.

What do the independent radio stations B92 (Belgrade) and Steal This Radio (New York City's Lower East Side) have in common? Both stations represent attempts to give voice to the many diverse, alternative and opposing voices within their communities. For both, radio is a means of fostering understanding, promoting community-based development and encouraging a broader vision of social democracy via broadcast dialogue. In each case, these voices and their access to the airwaves have been silenced by their respective governments who seem incapable of engaging in any type of peaceful communication with one another. The question of who can speak via the airwaves and who can listen remains a volatile political issue.

**Why Microradio?** Throughout the 1990s the US microradio movement has continued to grow and gain momentum despite recent court rulings and numerous FCC shutdowns and seizures. Pirate radio, or unlicensed microradio broadcasting, has a history dating back decades, but many point to Mbanna Kantako's Black Liberation Radio in Springfield, Illinois as the inspiration for the movement of the past decade. Mbanna began his station with a tiny 'one watt of truth' transmitter in 1989 to reach residents of a local housing project.

On the West coast, Stephen Dunifer founded Free Radio Berkeley (FRB) in 1993 and began progressive radio broadcasting to the Berkeley/Oakland area with a 50-watt transmitter. Dunifer and FRB went on to design and sell low-cost FM radio transmitter kits that, along with his touring radio workshop, soon populated the west coast with numerous community-based microradio stations. Dunifer also came to New York City in 1994 and presented a workshop sponsored by Paper Tiger at the War Resisters League building. Prior to this, Tetsuo Kogawa, a founder of Japan's microradio movement had also come to New York City, leaving behind plans for simple one-watt transmitters which soon began springing up in the NYC area.

Sensing its popularity, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) proclaimed war on microradio and ordered its commercial members to seek out and report microradio broadcasters in their

area to the FCC Enforcement Office. Up to this point the FCC had been fairly lax on enforcement of unlicensed stations, taking action only if complaints or interference issues were reported. With the NAB offensive, complaints began pouring in and, as required, the FCC began serving notice to the microradio broadcasters across the country. Without NAB assistance, it is unlikely most stations would have ever been detected since the FCC's own capabilities are routinely hampered by budget shortfalls. The microradio stations actually posed no problems to existing licensed stations or other communications services since the microradio movement was careful to avoid active frequencies and their use of filtering equipment prevented wandering over modulated signals that might pose

interference problems. Nonetheless, allegations of interference are routinely used to provoke swift FCC action. In the case of Steal This Radio, an allegation was made for signal interference with the existing Hofstra college station. Upon inquiry, Hofstra station operators knew nothing of the complaint and claimed there had never been any known interference issues.

While the NAB may have successfully awakened the FCC enforcement division, the FCC Mass Media Bureau responded by opening the door to the possible re-legalization of low power (microradio) broadcasting. FCC Chief William Kennard is outspoken on the need for low-power radio licenses to serve community needs, and, on January 18, 1999, the FCC issued a rule-making proposal for the possible creation of three new

classes of low-power FM radio licenses. Such low-power licenses existed prior to 1978 and were used by many colleges and other local nonprofits to service local communities. The elimination of these 100 watt-or-under licenses was due in part to the lobbying efforts of National Public Radio (NPR) which, coincidentally, was in the process of expanding its own nationwide network of local affiliates. Small, community-based nonprofit stations represented a competitive threat to NPR's goal of creating an affiliate-based monopoly on public broadcasting. As expected, NPR, and to no one's surprise, the NAB, have expressed strong opposition to the new FCC proposal, using technical concerns to cloak their economic interests. Both see any competition (even with small non-commercial stations) as an unnecessary risk to their current advertising and corporate underwriting schemes. The potential for renewed community based broadcasting comes at a time of great change within the broadcasting industry.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 eliminated or radically altered so many cross-ownership and multiple outlet rules that concentration of ownership within the industry has surpassed all expectations. The result is that fewer and fewer corporations are controlling more and more local media outlets. In radio, the typical scenario is that a local station is bought by a radio conglomerate (such as Chancellor Media or Capstar) which lays off the bulk of the local staff and replaces the station's studios with a computer system that receives the daily programming from the main corpo-

*The Telecommunications Act of 1996 eliminated or radically altered so many cross-ownership and multiple outlet rules that concentration of ownership within the industry has surpassed all expectations. The result is that fewer and fewer corporations are controlling more and more local media outlets.*



rate office. Should a local news program survive, it is typically reduced to an announcer reading from the headlines of the local paper, the only option since the spot news crews have been down-scaled out of existence. On the public broadcasting front, NPR and PBS have pursued corporate modeled bureaucratic and top down management changes that have been equally alarming, only adding to the lack of credibility and public accountability of these pseudo-public entities. NPR recently announced a new market-based licensing scheme with its affiliates that will dramatically increase the charges many local stations pay for the national programming service. In addition to corporate underwriting, NPR and PBS have also been selling portions of their unused (and presumably publicly owned) spectrum allocation to third parties for commercial applications.

Given these trends in media, it's no wonder that thousands of individuals have willingly broken the law to create community-based microradio stations to fill the void that the increasingly centralized corporate behemoths have left behind. Hopefully the current grassroots movement, a uniquely bottom-up organizing phenomenon, will help settle this issue in the public's favor once and for all.

—Excerpts from an article written by Michael Eisenmenger, *Paper Tiger*, New York, NY, 1999, telephone 212.420.9045.

## SUIT FILED ON BEHALF OF PACIFICA LISTENERS

by Carol Spooner

**Santa Rosa, California.** Long-time Pacifica radio listener-sponsors are heading to court. Twelve plaintiffs representing listener-sponsors of KPFA in Berkeley, KPFA in Los Angeles, KPFT in Houston, WPFW in Washington, D.C., and WBAI in New York, took the first step in their suit to remove the board of directors of the Pacifica Foundation for breach of a charitable trust.

The suit asserts the Pacifica Board must be removed for diverting Pacifica from its founding purposes, under the influence of the federally-funded Corporation for Public Broadcasting, in order to moderate its message and "grow its market share." Last July Pacifica hired a "private militia" and spent more than \$500,000 to lock-out the KPFA staff in Berkeley for 23 days as part of a plan to "shut down and reprogram" that station. The plan was revealed in an email memo from board member Michael Palmer to board chair Mary Frances Berry that was leaked to the Media Alliance, a San Francisco media watchdog group. The memo, which also discussed possible sale of KPFA or WBAI, was later authenticated by Palmer. Thousands of demonstrators forced Pacifica to return KPFA regular programming to the air after many staff and demonstrators were arrested.

The plaintiffs assert that Pacifica has already "reprogrammed" WPFW in Washington, D.C. and KPFT in Houston. Those stations now broadcast mainly jazz and country-western music, respec-

tively, with little of the local progressive community news and public affairs, radical commentary and political dissent that have been the Pacifica signature since its inception 50 years ago. "WPFW doesn't care about the progressive community in Washington," says plaintiff Leigh Hauter. "KPFT is just juke-box radio now," according to Rick Pothoff. "Station Manager Garland Ganter says we have more listeners now and raise more money. But anybody can do that with popular music. That's not why we fought for KPFT after the Ku Klux Klan bombed it off the air twice in the 1970s." Since "reprogramming" began in the early 1990s KPFT and KPFA have both lost much of their minority programming. At KPFA in Los Angeles, there were massive firings in 1995.

"It is truly ironic that the network that pioneered listener-sponsored radio has a totally undemocratic governance structure. This has allowed a small autocratic group to commandeer Pacifica and, we believe, subvert it from within," said plaintiff Carolyn Birden. Samori Marksman went on to say, "When contempt and arrogance rule, Pacifica loses its soul, its purpose, its values. The very essence of Pacifica is being compromised." "That's why we're going to court," says WBAI listener Patricia Heffley.

Excerpts from a prior press release from Committee to Remove the Pacifica Board, Santa Rosa, CA 95401, 707.526.2867, email: [wildrose@pon.net](mailto:wildrose@pon.net), webpage: <http://home.pon.net/wildrose/remove.htm>



## ANOTHER CONTROVERSY SIMMERS IN AUSTIN

After an 11-year struggle, Jim Ellinger of Austin, Texas founder of Austin's pride and joy, KO.OP Cable Radio 91.7FM, finally enjoyed a four year period of radio bliss. The community-based station was most known for its broadcast of alternative music and views, and in-depth discussion of local issues. Small KO.OP Radio has been plagued by controversy over content and management, similar to that of the Pacifica battle. In Austin's case the battle is not to become more moderate but a struggle to go even further to the left. The issue, although not resolved, seems to be in remission. Jim Ellinger, host of "Austin Airwaves" weekly news program that was pulled during the controversy says, "My purpose in establishing KO.OP Radio was to conduct an experiment in applying democratic principals to a media outlet. I worked 11 long years to gain the license, then turned it over to the community. Democracy is stone cold dead at KOOP, killed by a handful of holier-than-thou, ultra-politically-correct-types. The boycott of KOOP continues to grow and expand daily."



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## Canada to Create Network of 10M Public Internet Sites

OTTAWA, December 15, 1999 — John Manley, Minister of Industry, today invited urban and rural communities across Canada interested in establishing public Internet access sites to submit proposals to the Community Access Program (CAP) on or before Friday, February 4, 2000.

Through CAP, the Government of Canada plans to establish a national network of up to 10,000 public access sites. Launched in 1994, CAP has already established over 4,200 sites in approximately 3,000 rural and remote communities.

"CAP is a key component of the government's *Connecting Canadians* strategy aimed at making Canada the world's most connected nation," said Minister Manley. "Today Industry Canada is extending the benefits of connectivity to even more Canadians as we expand the program to include urban centres with populations over 50,000."

Canadian organizations, such as educational institutions, public libraries, community organizations, and municipal and territorial governments are encouraged to submit proposals. CAP offers matching funds of up to \$17,000 per site to successful applicants. The community funds can include cash or estimates of the value of "in kind" contributions such as facilities, equipment and staffing of their public access sites.

Industry Canada has concluded cost-shared agreements with the Governments of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan (rural only) and the Yukon for the joint implementation of CAP. Under these agreements, deadlines for proposals can vary in timing and frequency.

Proposals will be evaluated through an independent review process involving individuals with extensive experience in community affairs, business and social development, electronic networking and education. Site selection criteria and guidelines for proposal preparation can be found on the CAP web site at <http://cap.ic.gc.ca>

## SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUGGLE...

**continued from page 20**

ages duplication and even competition. Efforts to bring community media under one banner have faltered due to a lack of organisational capacity to sustain an umbrella body and the failure to bring civil society formations, as well as democratic electronic media, on board.

It is time that the discourse on community media moves beyond the deliberations of narrow sectoral interests and the corridors of government decision making and out into the realm of civil society where it belongs. Communities, through representative organs of civil society, are the direct beneficiaries and stakeholders in community media and it is appropriate that citizens engage in this debate directly. The channels of communication between the community media sector, communities and actors in the electronic media sector need to be opened in a way that explores the realities of convergence and with the aim of building a unified voice toward the realisation of common goals.

*Karen Thorne is president of Videazimut and a media consultant for Media For Change Agency [MECA]. Contact her at [karent@sn.apc.org](mailto:karent@sn.apc.org)*



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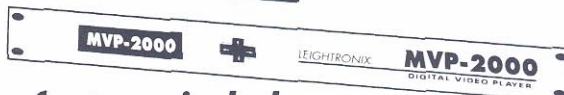
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